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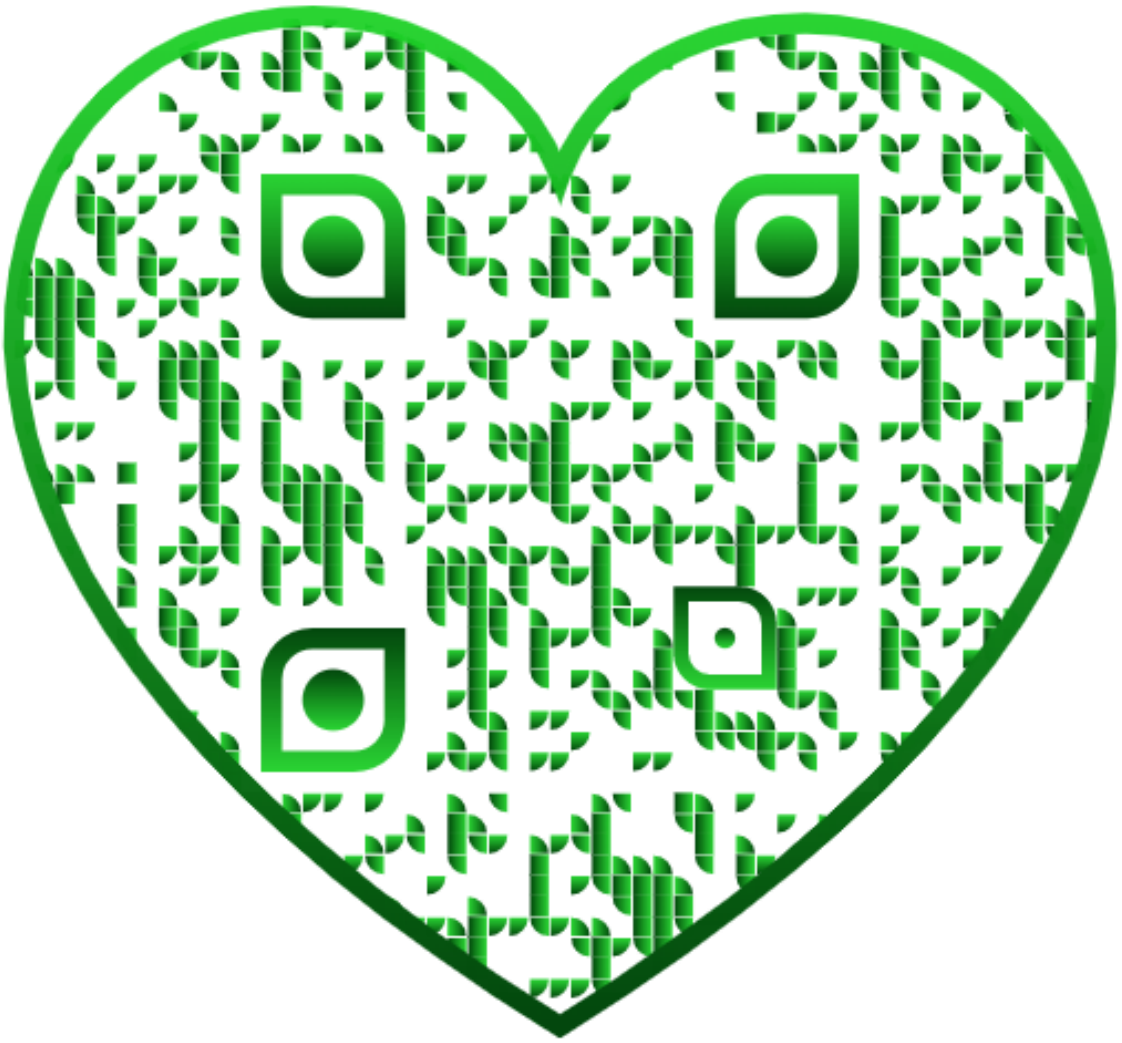

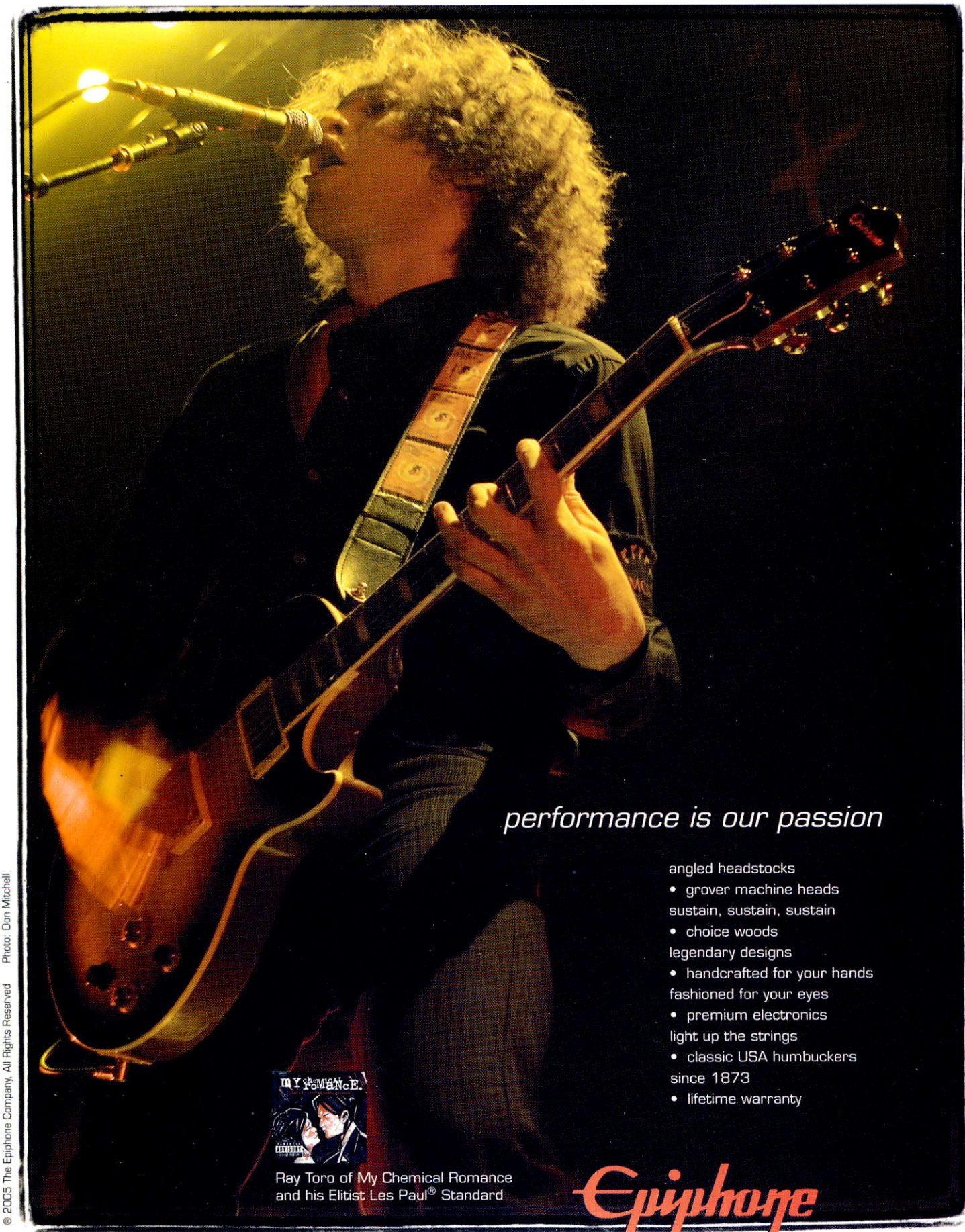

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ISSN 1045-6295

FUTURE PLC
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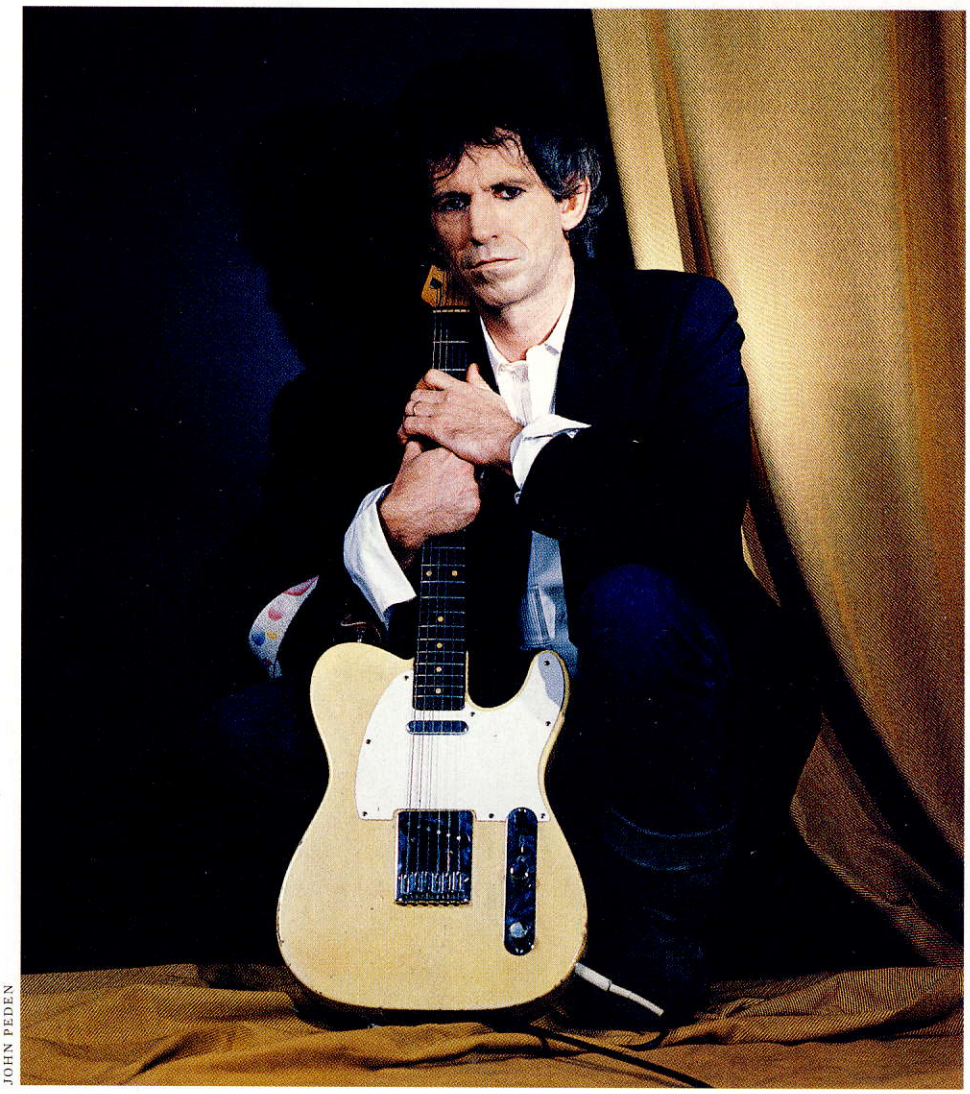

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Cover photograph by:
Bob Gruen

No Stone

Unturned

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT THE ROLLING STONES' ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER.

BY JOE BOSSO

It was the night of Keith Richards' 38th birthday in December, 1981, when the Stones played the Hampton Coliseum in Hampton, Virginia. A sea of balloons rained down upon the ecstatic crowd as the band whipped out an exuberant encore of "Satisfaction." Suddenly, a crazed fan ran past security and bum-rushed the stage, making a beeline right toward Richards. Without so much as blinking an eye, Richards did what came naturally: he ripped off his black Telecaster, administered some well-placed whacks to the dude, catching him full in the chest, and swatted him away like an annoying fly. Then, cool as only Keith can be, he calmly put his ax back on and went right on playing.

Sure, Richards knew that the guy was only a fan of the Greatest Rock and Roll Band in the World. But he didn't like him.»

BRIAN JONES (FOREGROUND) JAMMING WITH KEITH RICHARDS IN 1968

WALLACE HEATON/CAMERA PRESS/RETNA LTD.

NINETEEN-YEAR-OLD Keith Richards was chuffed as a squiffy cart pony. Having recently been expelled from the Sidcup Art College, the young blues enthusiast was riding a commuter train in London when who did he bump into? His old mate Mike Jagger, from his hometown of Dartford, Kent. Mike was going through the motions of applying himself to his schoolwork at the London School of Economics. Although Jagger has a vague notion of entering politics, he, too, had been bit by the music bug. He even did some singing, too, bashing about with local chums, nothing serious. Even though it had been years since they'd seen each other, "We recognized each other straight off," recalled Richards, who was especially gobsmacked to see the records Jagger carried under his arm: Chuck Berry, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf—all the latest imports. Suddenly, school didn't seem so important to the two young blues hounds.

They started hanging out, eventually summoning enough courage to jam together. Convinced that they didn't sound half-bad, the guitarist and singer decided to form a band. This required other players, but nobody within their circle was good enough—or commited enough—for serious consideration. One day they traveled to Ealing to hear a band that had become all the rage: Blues Incorporated.

Jagger and Richards couldn't understand it—the group was *old*; most of them were over 30, which qualified them as dinosaurs. But on this particular day a guest guitarist was invited to sit in halfway through the set; he was the same age as Mike and Keith, and he had the coolest name: Elmo Lewis. Lewis was a dynamo, whipping out scalding riffs on a bottle neck slide guitar. Mike and Keith were agape—*here was their guy*. After the gig, they were all over Elmo Lewis, whom they soon learned wasn't really Elmo Lewis at all—his name was Brian Jones.

JULY 1976

Despite the fact that he had a wife and a child, Jones was more than up for forming a new band with Mike and Keith, so much so that he persuaded the two to move in together with him. "It was disgusting," recalled Richards of the cheap, revolting little flat on Edith Grove. "[*There was*] mold growing on the walls." While Jagger headed off to school—he was keen on the group, but mindful of his parents' wishes—Keith and Brian played guitars in the kitchen, perfecting a technique that Richards would later describe as "guitar weaving"; the idea was to make two guitars sound as one, just like they did on the Chicago blues records they adored. One second Keith was playing lead and Brian rhythm; then they'd switch. Mike would leave for school and the two would be in the kitchen playing. He's come home and they'd still be at it—weaving, weaving. This went on for days and weeks on end.

During these salad days when even salad seemed beyond their reach, they gigged semiregularly at the Flamingo, the Ealing Blues Club, and the Marquee.

The three men needed a rhythm section badly. One by one, it arrived: First there was William Perks, a skinny geezer pushing 30 who had a wife and a child. He called himself Bill Wyman and he was as uncool as they came, but he played bass better than anybody else knocking on their door. More importantly, he had not one amp but *two*. That decided it: he was in.

And then there was the glue they'd been looking for: Charlie Watts, a graphic artist in an advertising firm who had spent some time drumming for Blues Incorporated. The guy wasn't just good, he was great, deadly accurate but with swing for days. For a time he resisted joining up with the new band, but eventually they wore him down. The group's pal Ian Stewart, older still, a big beefy guy who made Bill Wyman look like Adonis, played boogie-woogie piano; better yet, he had a van, so of course he was in. Now all they needed was a name, and some luck. And maybe a manager.

Andrew Loog Oldham was all of 19 years old when he whirled into the Rollin' Stones' lives (Brian had hit upon the name while booking a gig: "What are we called?" He looked down at a Muddy Waters album. "Um, the Rollin' Stones!"). What Oldham lacked in actual experience—he worked briefly as a press agent for Brian Epstein (yes, that Brian Epstein, who managed the just-exploding Beatles)—he made up for in moxie, and moxie got you pretty far in London in 1963, especially if you were convinced that what the world needed as an antidote to the four cute, clean, cuddly Beatles were five uncute, unclean and uncuddly Rolling Stones.

Oldham had a way about him, and he had his way with

MICHAEL OCHS

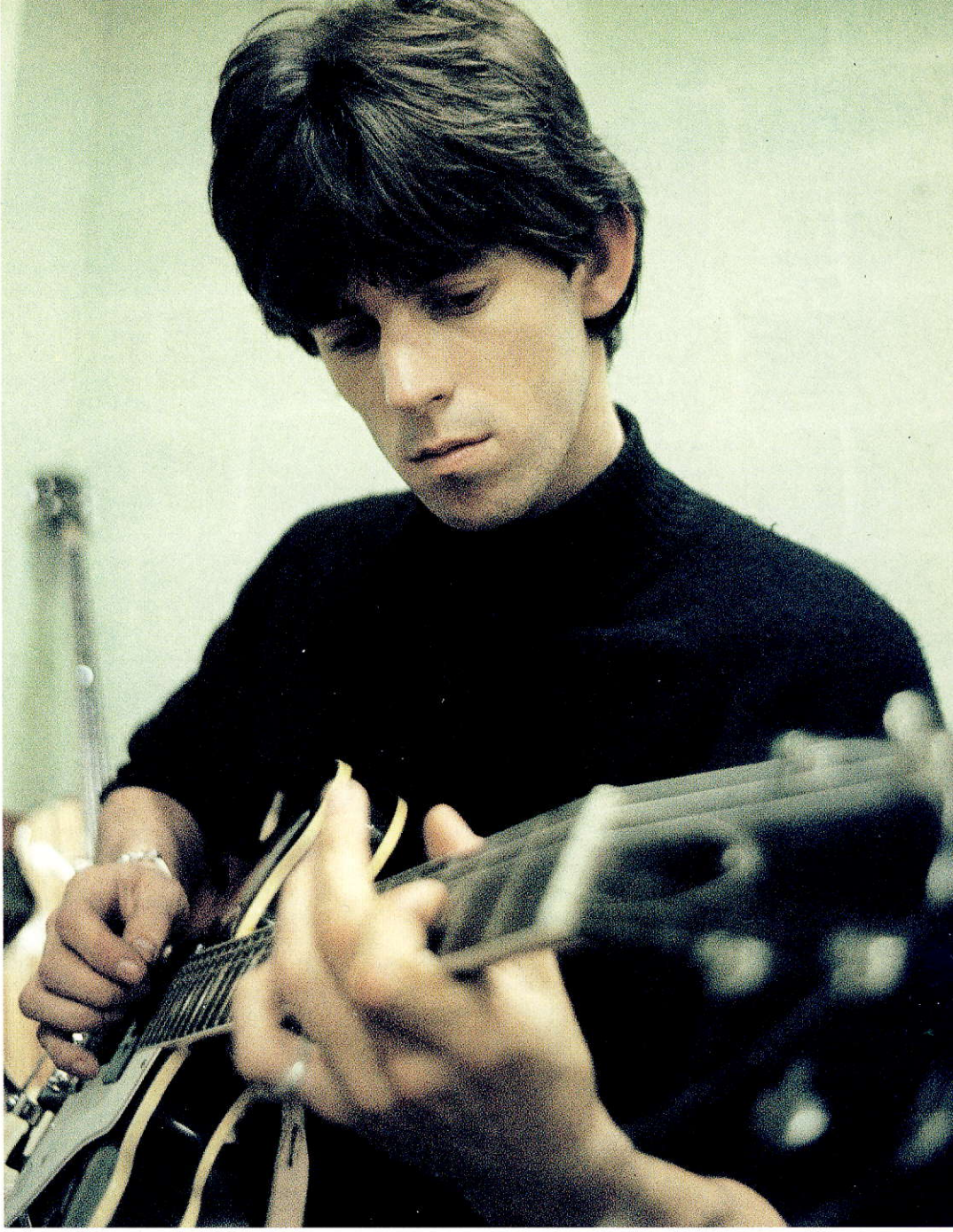
the Stones, convincing Mike Jagger that *Mick* was a better first name; that Keith Richard was cooler than Richards (the guitarist would later restore the "s" to his surname); that the Rolling Stones worked better without an apostrophe; and that big beefy Ian Stewart was fine for playing on records but definitely not on-stage. And he had a way with record company men, too, especially Dick Rowe at Decca. Rowe was already famous—infamous—for turning down the Beatles, and he wasn't about to take that chance again (it didn't hurt that George Harrison had already mentioned something to Rowe about the Stones being the Next Big Thing). Oldham snagged his boys a big fat contract, bigger than the Beatles' deal at EMI. But if the Rolling Stones had a prayer of upstaging the Fab Four, they needed a song. And who better to supply it than the Fabs themselves?

Drunk with success (and on that day literally drunk on alcohol), John Lennon and Paul McCartney were more than happy to toss a bone to their one-time PR flack. Mick and Keith sat, mouths wide open, as right before their eyes, the two Beatles threw together "I Wanna Be Your Man," which would, in fact, become the Rolling Stones' first hit. But before the Stones' champagne was uncorked came an edict from Oldham, who, in addition to manager had anointed himself the band's producer, despite the fact that he'd never produced so much as a test reel: Mick and Keith, you won't go anywhere without more hit songs. Your *own* hit songs. And so the manager with moxie literally locked the two Dartford boys in a room and said don't come out until you've got a hit song.

The ballad they wrote, "As Tears Go By," would not only be a hit for the Rolling Stones, but it was a bigger hit for Marianne Faithful, Oldham's new discovery. Hip, young and virginal-looking Marianne looked great on the arm of hip, young and no-so-virginal-looking Mick Jagger. The two were suddenly *the* hot couple of Swinging London (although Mick, never the settling-down sort, was also seen squiring the model Chrissie Shrimpton around town). Everything was now happening at hyper-speed, as the Stones knocked down England with a force second only to the Beatles. The States soon followed—"Time Is on My Side" wowed TV audiences on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. And onstage, the Stones were quite a show: Wyman stood as still as a cigar-store Indian, but the others put out like a volcano, Jagger especially, prancing and preening like a strip tease dancer. The band had smartened up their look with flash clothes, but, as per Oldham's instructions, they didn't smile, they didn't play nice—they were *dangerous*. Oldham even orchestrated a "Would You Let Your Daughter Date a Rolling Stone?" campaign in the papers that worked like a charm.

While the Beatles mastered the art of making hit albums, the Stones became England's truly great singles band. Having famously broken up with Shrimpton, Jagger had juicy subject matter that came out in songs such as "Heart of Stone," "The Last Time," "Play with Fire," "19th Nervous Breakdown," "Stupid Girl," and the first great anti-feminist ode, "Under My Thumb." The songs were sinuous, slippery, distorted and lo-fi compared to sonic gloss of the Beatles recordings.

Richards and Jones were a vicious guitar duo. Richards usually employed a variety of Epiphones, Gretsches and Guilds, while Jones, ever the fashion plate, played an impossibly groovy-looking white Vox teardrop guitar. Their concerts were mob scenes, and while the band were more than happy to play the part of a pop band to a point, they made sure to leave room for bits of authentic blues and r&b swing. Shy and reserved at the beginning of his singing career, Jagger, egged on by Oldham, became a consummate performer. Little by little, the focus was on him, which left a bitter taste in Brian Jones' mouth—for years he had assumed that *he* was, in fact, the leader of the Stones. Now he had to make do with his role as coguitarist. And forget about songwriting—Oldham



KEITH IN 1965

GERED MANKOWITZ

The band was living in the South of France, **TAX EXILES**, *so rich they could no longer reside full-time in their mother country.*

had delivered the marching orders: Jagger and Richards, like Lennon and McCartney, were the de facto writers for the Stones.

One night in 1965, while on tour in America, Keith Richards woke up with a riff in his head. Luckily, he traveled with a portable Philips Norelco cassette tape recorder (only rock stars, at the time, could get their hands on such a device). Keith turned on the tape and promptly played the guitar riff that opened "Satisfaction" before falling back asleep. When he awoke the next morning he listened to the tape and knew he had something special. As he recalled, it was "Two minutes of 'Satisfaction' and 40 minutes of me snoring."

The band quickly set about recording Keith's new song. With lyrics supplied by Jagger, they cut two versions of the song, an all-acoustic version at Chess Studios in Chicago, and an electric version—the keeper—at RCA Studios in Hollywood. What made the track sound different from anything else at that time was Keith's guitar, which he played through a Gibson Maestro fuzzbox, a new gizmo he had just received. Included on the American version of *Out of Our Heads* (it was issued as a single in the U.K.), "Satisfaction" was a world-wide smash, the biggest song of the Stones' career thus far.

But the Beatles always seemed one step ahead of the commercial game, and after their breakthrough *Rubber Soul* it became obvious that singles alone wouldn't make it; the Rolling Stones had to write a great stand-alone album.

Aftermath, unlike the three previous Stones studio albums, wasn't merely a piecing together of super singles and sub-standard filler; its songs were strung together in a concerted effort of unity. And Jones, becoming bored with the guitar (and resentful of being pushed out of the spotlight by Oldham) began, like George Harrison, to experiment. His contributions to *Aftermath*, which included the sitar, dulcimer and harpsichord—there didn't seem to be an instrument he couldn't coax music from—were integral to the album's purposeful vision.

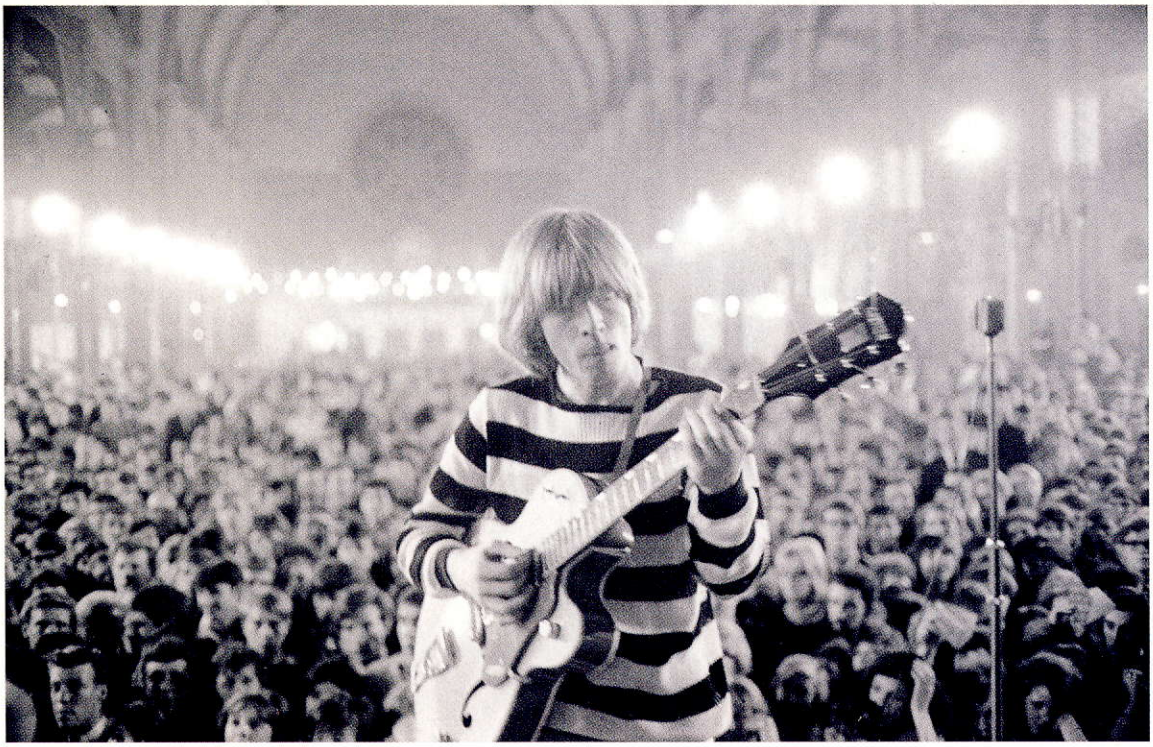
With success came excess, and the Stones, save for Wyman and Watts, cheerfully partook of all London had to offer. There were pills to gobble, grass to smoke; there were LSD parties. And there were girls, girls, girls, most of them shared between bandmates.

Constant touring and recording dates took their toll. The first to slide was Jones, who started showing up at sessions late, often too baked to work. Even half-baked, he couldn't play the guitar properly, so he relegated himself to that of an ornamentalist, playing marimbas, much to the chagrin of Keith Richards, who would be forced to pick up the bulk of the guitar chores. On *Between the Buttons* Richards played practically all the guitars.

1967 was a hard year for the Stones. While the Beatles were preparing to launch *Sgt. Pepper's* on an unsuspecting public, the Stones were embroiled in a series of drug busts. The first came when both Jagger and Richards were caught in a raid at Keith's Sussex estate, Redlands. Prosecutors were trying to make a name for themselves by busting famous pop stars, and who better to nab than two of the dirty, dangerous Stones? Both Jagger and Richards were found guilty of cannabis possession, but their

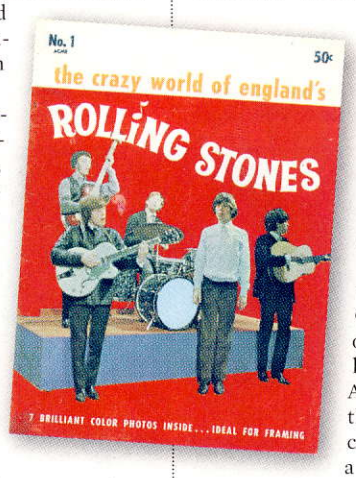
ARRIVING IN PARIS, AUGUST 1965

PIERRE FOURNIER/SYGMA/CORBIS



convictions were overturned after the *London Times* ran a sympathetic editorial. Then it was Jones' turn. In May 1967 authorities raided his house and found marijuana, cocaine and methamphetamine. Jones confessed to marijuana use but claimed that the other narcotics had been planted by police. He was given probation and ordered to see a drug counselor.

During this time, Mick and Keith became increasingly hostile toward Jones. His drug use, despite his probation, continued unabated. And he was drinking heavily, too. His once angelic face had become puffy; shopping bags weighed down his eyes. During one session, zonked out of his gourd, he asked Jagger what instrument he should play on a track, to which Jagger snorted, "What *can* you play?"



1967's *Between the Buttons* was a disastrous affair, and unlike other Stones releases, it contained no hit singles. Even worse, Jagger and Richards, in an effort to keep pace with the Beatles, concocted the poorly received *Their Satanic Majesties Request*, an attempt to be Pop Art and cosmic. Although it contained the stellar tracks "She's a Rainbow" and "2000 Light Years from Home," it was seen as an also-ran to *Sgt. Pepper's*. Chastened by their failure, the Stones never again attempted to outdo the Beatles; they would go back to being the raw, bluesy, swaggering Stones.

Which meant that some serious housecleaning was in order. The band severed their ties with Andrew Loog Oldham, and Jagger and Richards installed the burly, blustery Allen Klein as the group's business manager. But that's as far as it went: Klein was to leave the artistic decisions to the Stones. By all accounts, it was a wise move.

Impressed by his work with Blind Faith and the Spencer Davis Group, the Stones enlisted Brooklyn-born Jimmy Miller to produce their next album. It would be a return to the primal blues of their roots. One of the songs cut for the album, a single called "Jumpin' Jack Flash," was released in May 1968 and became a No. 1 hit, rivaling "Satisfaction." While their smash single ruled the charts, the Stones began recording what would mark Brian Jones' last substantial effort with the group. He contributed some stunning slide guitar to "No Expectations," played harmonica on "Dear Doctor," "Prodigal Son" and "Parachute Woman," added tambura to "Street Fighting Man" (to which Keith loaded with heavily distorted acoustic guitars), and on the fade out of "Stray Cat Blues" he played the mellotron. Although the finished album, *Beggar's Banquet*, would be heralded as the Rolling Stones' finest album to date, it also signaled the beginning of the end for Brian Jones. His last appearance with the band was in December 1968, at the ill-fated *The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus*. The film, which was locked in a vault for over 20 years, shows a clearly inebriated Jones barely able to stand, let alone play guitar.

ABOVE: JONES AT THE ALEXANDRA PALACE IN LONDON, JUNE 26, 1964. BELOW: THE BAND ON THE COVER OF AN EARLY FANZINE

With his drug intake increasing (he was now addicted to Mandrax, similar to Quaaludes), and unable to tour because of his numerous busts, Jones contributed little to the next Stones album, *Let It Bleed*. Aside from playing autoharp on "You Got the Silver" and barely audible extra percussion on "Midnight Rambler," he was a Stone in name alone; forgotten but not gone. And soon he was gone, replaced by ex-Bluesbreaker guitarist Mick Taylor.

Let It Bleed topped the artistic triumph of *Beggar's Banquet*, with Keith Richards' back-and-forth rhythm playing on the scarifying "Midnight Rambler" setting a new standard for blues-rock guitar. And on the ass-kicking "Monkey Man," his guitar work isn't just raw; it *hurts*.

As the Stones prepared to release their second superlative record in only a year's time and mount their first tour in three years, Brian Jones retreated to his country estate called Crotchford Farm. On July 4, 1969, the band got the call they knew was coming for years: Jones was dead. He was found motionless at the bottom of his swimming pool. The death

PRIME CUTS

KEITH ON "JUMPIN' JACK FLASH"

"JUMPIN' JACK Flash" comes from this guy, Jack Dyer, who was my gardener—an old English yokel. Mick and I were in my house down in the south of England. We'd been up all night; the sky was just beginning to go gray. It was pissing down raining, if I remember rightly. Mick and I were sitting there, and suddenly Mick starts up. He hears these great footsteps, these great rubber boots—*slosh, slosh, slosh*—going by the window. He said. "What's that?" And I said, "Oh, that's Jack. That's jumpin' Jack." We had my guitar in open tuning, and I started to fool around with that. [*singing*] "Jumpin' Jack..." and Mick says, "Flash." He'd just woken up. And suddenly we had this wonderful alliterative phrase. So he woke up and we knocked it together.

On the record I played a Gibson Hummingbird [*acoustic*] tuned to either open E or open D with a capo. And then I added another [*acoustic*] guitar over the top, but tuned to Nashville tuning [*tuned like a 12-string guitar without the lower octave strings*]. I learned that from somebody in George Jones band, in San Antonio in '63. We happened to be playing the World Teen Fair together. This guy in a Stetson and cowboy boots showed me how to do it, with the different strings, to get that high ring. I was picking up tips.

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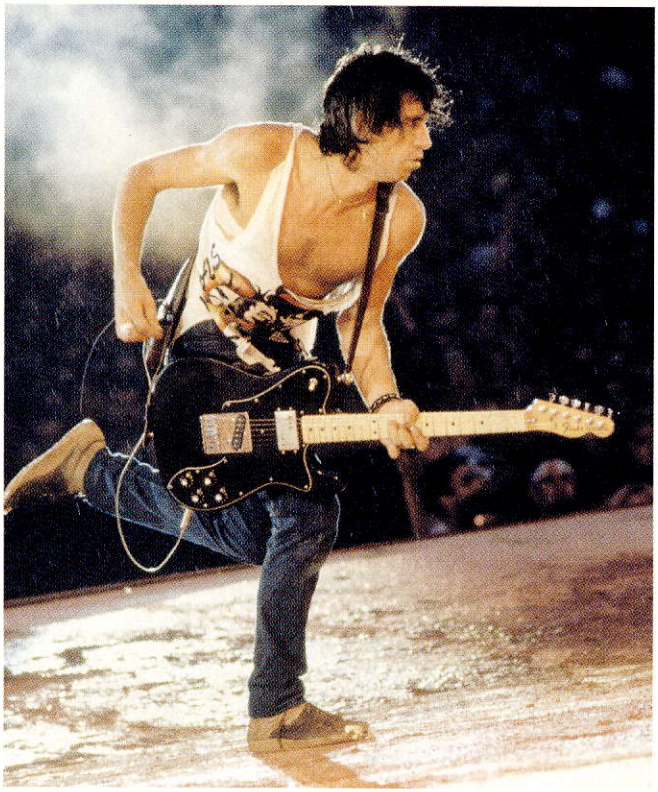


ABOVE: KEITH ONSTAGE IN 1982 BELOW: THE BAND AT THE PLAYBOY CLUB IN NEW YORK ON MAY 2, 1965

PRIME CUTS

KEITH ON "SATISFACTION"

WHEN I WROTE the song, I didn't think of that particular riff as the big guitar riff. That all fell into place at RCA [*recording studio in L.A.*] when Gibson dumped on me one of those first Fuzz-Tone pedals. I actually thought of that guitar line as a horn riff. The way Otis Redding ended up doing it is probably closer to my original conception for the song. It's an obvious horn riff. And when this new Fuzz-Tone pedal arrived in the studio from the local dealership or something, I said, "Oh, this is good. It's got a bit of sustain, so I can use it to sketch out the horn line." So we left the track and went back out on the road. And two weeks later I hear it on the radio. I said, "No, that was just a demo!" They said, "No, it's a hit." At least Otis got it right. Our version was a demo for Otis.

was ruled by authorities as "Death by misadventure."

Two days later, at a free concert in London's Hyde Park, the Stones christened their new guitarist. The day was sweltering and the band was rusty, and a funereal air surrounded the proceedings. Mick Jagger read a poem in tribute to Brian Jones before releasing mostly dead (from the heat) white butterflies into the audience. But all was not doom and gloom: the band's raunchy new single, "Honky Tonk Women," had just been released, and it quickly zoomed to No. 1.

The Stones' 1969 U.S. tour was a madhouse. Audiences went wild for the band they hadn't seen in three years, and the Stones reveled in actually being able to hear themselves onstage (it was the first tour in which they used monitors). The guitar interplay between Keith Richards and Mick Taylor, which represented a break from the "guitar-weaving" of the early Stones, announced a more pronounced separation in the duties of lead and rhythm playing. Still, they were razor-sharp: Taylor, his head bowed in concentration, usually favored Les Pauls, while Richards went through a variety of guitars—Les Pauls, Telecasters and his new favorite, a Dan Armstrong Plexiglas see-through model. But the band brought the tour, and the Sixties, to a close on the darkest of notes at another free concert, this time held at the Altamont Speedway, just outside of San Francisco. A case model in how-not-to-throw-an-outdoor-show, it was a day of stoned hippies baking in the sun while they waited for the Stones to play come nightfall. In a disastrous move, the band hired the Hell's Angels to undertake security. Drunk on copious amounts of free beer, the Angels didn't share the "good vibes" of the audience, and during the Stones' performance of "Under My Thumb," one member of the Angels fatally stabbed a concertgoer who had drawn a firearm during a scuffle. The Maysles' Brothers' brilliant film *Gimme Shelter* documented the event.

THE STONES ushered in the Seventies by laying relatively low, at least by their standards. Mick, the bachelor's bachelor, surprised the world by marrying the Nicaraguan model Bianca Perez Moreno de Macias (who was pregnant at the time with the couple's daughter, Jade); and Keith became a father when his off-and-on girlfriend Anita Pallenberg gave birth to the couple's son, Marlon. (They also have a daughter, Angela). Keith also spent a good deal of time getting involved in heroin and hanging out with his buddy and fellow heroin enthusiast, ex-Byrd and ex–Flying Burrito Brother Gram Parsons. Parsons was one of the pioneers of the California country-rock sound, and he was a master of alternate guitar tunings. Back in '69 he showed Keith a five-string open G tuning (G D D B D) that Richards famously employed on "Honey Tonk Women." Now he was showing him even more new tricks, including "Nashville stringing" (which involves using only the light strings of a 12-string set), which Keith put to use on "Wild Horses," from the Stones' '71 album *Sticky Fingers*, released on the band's own record label, the inventively named Rolling Stones Records. In time, Keith would become widely associated with open tunings and the use of five strings on his guitars.

By now the band was living in the South of France, tax exiles, so rich they could no longer reside full-time in their mother country. Tracks for their new album were recorded in the basement of Richards' new home, Nellcote, at Villefranche-sur-Mer, near Nice, utilizing the Stones'

TOP: DENIS O'REGAN/CORBIS. BOTTOM: WILLIAM "POPSIE" RANDOLPH

MICK AND KEITH RECORDING *EXILE ON MAIN ST.* AT SUNSET SOUND IN 1972

new mobile recording unit. Other sessions were held at Olympic Studios in London; at Jagger's Stargroves country estate in East End, Newbury, England; and at Sunset Sound Recorders in Los Angeles. Recording sessions were long, loose, messy affairs—drugs were in plentiful supply, with only Jagger, Watts and Wyman abstaining. Wyman often avoided sessions altogether, and so Richards played bass on many tracks. Jagger himself wasn't around all that much, as he now seemed more interested in jet-setting with Bianca than playing music. But when he finally touched down in Los Angeles, something about the music the band recorded lighted a fire under his ass, and he threw himself into the nearly finished tracks with fervor.

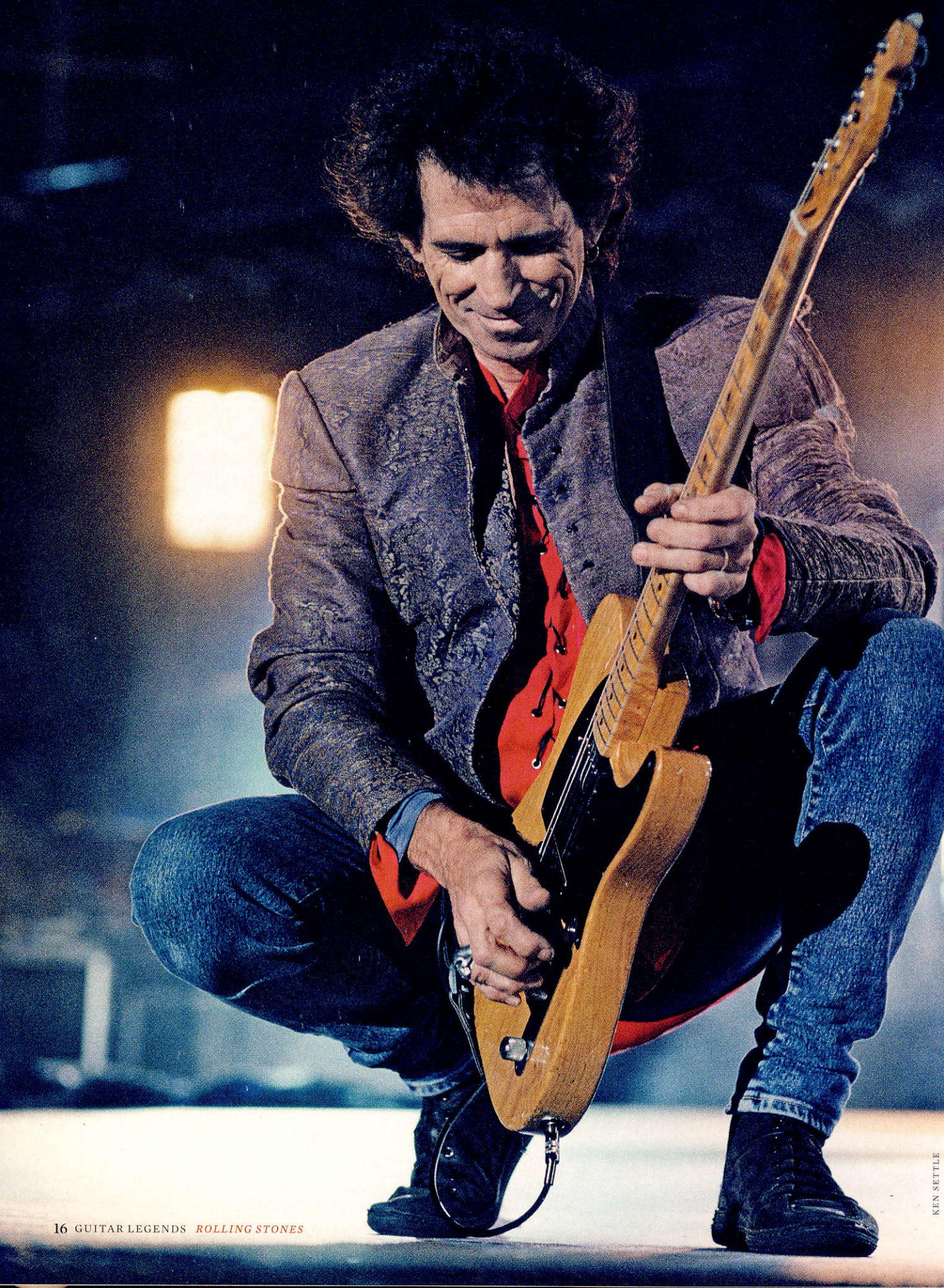
*With success came **EXCESS**, and the Stones partook of **ALL** London had to offer.*

Released in May 1972, the double-album *Exile on Main St.* immediately shot to No. 1 on both sides of the Atlantic. Although it initially received lukewarm reviews (many critics called the record bloated and self-indulgent), its legend grew steadily and it is now considered by many to be the Stones' finest hour (or two). Containing blasts of furious rock and roll ("Rocks Off," "Rip This Joint") gospel ("Sweet Black Angel," "Shine a Light") and sturdy blues ("Casino Boogie," "Stop Breaking Down"), it's a dense, dizzying experience, with Richards' and Taylor's guitars rising up like wavy lines of heat from a long stretch of highway. With *Exile* a hit, the Stones mounted their biggest tour yet, taking along numerous guest musicians such as Bobby Keyes on sax and Billy Preston on keyboards. Matched only by Led Zeppelin for their on-the-road hedonism, the Stones left a trail of trashed hotel rooms, abandoned groupies and wealthy drug dealers in their wake.

The next few years were bumpy. Richards' heroin use was escalating, Jagger's irritation was building, and Mick Taylor was growing resentful of his limited role in the band. The Stones issued albums in '73 and '74, *Goats Head Soup* and *It's Only Rock'n Roll*, respectively, but both were seen as stagnant, uninspired works. When Jagger reneged on a promise to Taylor for songwriting credit on the latter album, an exasperated Taylor announced he was quitting the band.

Ron Wood always seemed to be in the right place at the right time. Better yet, he knew how to make friends. An equally talented bassist and guitarist, he had been a member of the Jeff Beck Group (which featured singer Rod Stewart) and the Faces (which also featured Stewart). Now here he was, at a party in 1975, being asked by Mick Jagger to replace Mick Taylor in the Rolling Stones. The band had already auditioned British guitarists Peter Frampton and Jeff Beck, plus American session players Wayne Perkins and Harvey

JIM MARSHALL



KEN SETTLE

ABOVE: SHOOTING A VIDEO IN 1978 LEFT: KEITH IN INDIANAPOLIS DURING THE *VOODOO LOUNGE* TOUR IN 1994

Mandel, but nobody seemed to fit. Wood was flattered at the invitation, but he told Jagger that his allegiance was to the Faces. Soon after, Rod Stewart decided that *his* allegiance was to his new solo career, and just like that, Ron Wood decided to join a band that didn't feature Rod Stewart. He became a Rolling Stone.

Wood contributed to the recording of the band's next album, *Black and Blue*, a funky and rocking step in the right direction, but his real trial by fire came with the Stones' massive 1975 tour. Jagger, trying to keep pace with the extravagant theatrics of Elton John and the group Queen, insisted on outrageous stage props and gimmicks (including a giant inflatable phallus). Richards was aghast—to him, the Stones were supposed to be about the *music*. The giant inflatable phallus–loving Jagger won out.

Richards would have bigger concerns by 1977 when he and Anita Pallenberg were arrested in Toronto and charged with heroin possession. For Keith, who had danced around other minor drug charges in the past, this represented the first real possibility that he'd do hard prison time. The case dragged on for over a year, and eventually Keith was given a suspended sentence and ordered to play two free concerts for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. He and Ron Wood formed the New Barbarians (which also included Stanley Clarke, Bobby Keyes and Ian McLagan) to perform at the shows. What were supposed to be two concerts, however, turned into a proper tour—the band got on so well they played throughout the States and finished up with a blow-out at Knebworth Park in England.

More significantly, the thought of prison scared Keith more or less straight and he was finally motivated to kick heroin for good. This coincided with the end of his long relationship with Anita Pallenberg and the beginning of his relationship with actress and model Patti Hansen, whom he would later marry.

Despite the personal turmoil surrounding them (Jagger, who had been involved in a bitter and expensive divorce with Bianca, had taken up with Texas model Jerry Hall), Mick and Keith got creative again and produced (under the noms de plume the Glimmer Twins) the Stones' finest album in years, *Some Girls*. With the exception of the big disco hit "Miss You," much of the record was tight, focused rock and roll—the Stones, who were already being called dinosaurs by punk rockers, shot back with the raucous, New Wave–inspired "Shattered." Keith famously documented his troubles with the law on "Before They Make Me Run," on which he sang lead. And the Richards/Wood guitar duo gelled on tracks like "Beast of Burden," which eerily recalled the "guitar weaving" technique of Richards/Jones.

1980's *Emotional Rescue* seemed to mark time, but 1981's *Tattoo You* kicked a donkey's ass, becoming the across-the-board critical and commercial smash that had eluded the band for years. "Start Me Up" was Keith's catchiest five-string riff since "Honky Tonk Women," and the tender ballad, "Waiting on a Friend," a song which had collected dust since the *Goats Head Soup* sessions, became

Keith Richards' back-and-forth rhythm playing on "MIDNIGHT RAMBLER" set a new standard for blues-rock guitar.

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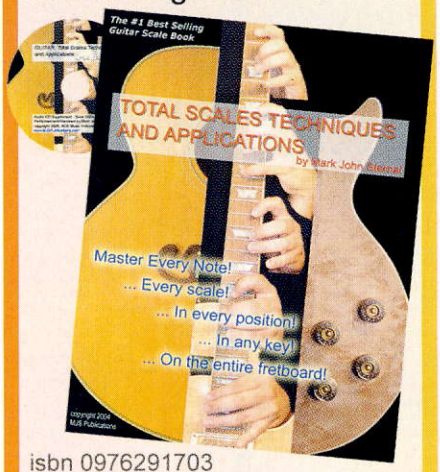

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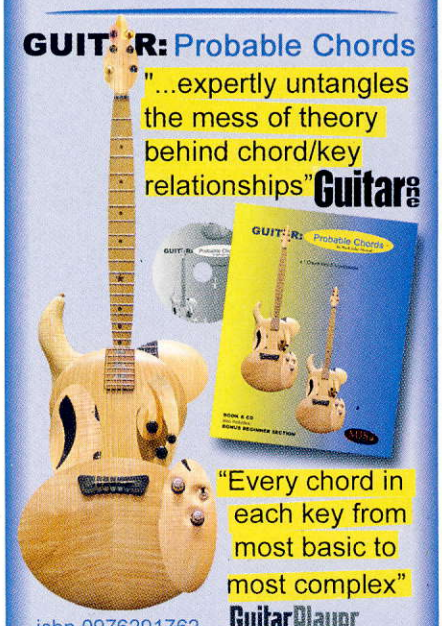

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The tour was a justified celebration by a band that had come so close to imploding on so many occasions.

one of the most played tracks on the new video channel MTV. The band's 1981 tour, sponsored by Jovan(!), was their biggest yet. Skeptical critics, already questioning if Mick and Keith, both of whom had yet to turn 40, could be relevant in the Eighties, were knocked out by the group's renewed passion and energy.

The Stones would need plenty of both to get through the Eighties. 1983's *Undercover* was turgid, joyless and murky—the band had taken a dramatic about-face from the skylarking artfulness of *Tattoo You*. And when Jagger signed his own solo deal with the band's new record label, Sony, Richards was pissed off to no end; to him, this was an unforgivable slight against the band. But the worst blow came when the band's longtime friend, piano player and road manager, Ian Stewart, died of a heart attack in 1985. Since the early Sixties, he had been the unheralded steadying force behind the Stones, the go-to guy everybody could go to for a shoulder to cry on. Without Stewart, the band felt unmoored.

Jagger and Richards started to take decades of frustration out on each other. Mick finally made good on his threat to release a solo album, *She's the Boss*, which didn't help matters one bit. But the fact that the album wasn't a major hit (it peaked at No. 6 and quickly slid down the charts), rather than smacking Jagger back to reality, had the reverse effect—by the time Stones were in the studio cutting 1986's aptly titled *Dirty Work*, the singer was already plotting his next solo album. Richards went ballistic. For years he had been too fucked up on drugs to shoulder the weight of the band; now here he was, clean (but not entirely sober) and ready to take on the world, and Jagger was too concerned with being a solo star than a Rolling Stone. The two went at it, both privately and in the press, and for the first time since 1966 the band broke with their pattern of touring every three years. Although nobody made a formal announcement, all within the Stones' inner circle assumed the band was finally finished.

"The idea of a solo record, to me, is already mind-boggling," Keith Richards told *Guitar World* in 1988. "It meant that I failed in my task of keeping my band together." Richards might have never wanted to do his own solo album, but that didn't stop him from turning in a show-stopper. *Talk Is Cheap*, which he recorded with the X-Pensive Winos, a group he assembled that included Charley Drayton on bass, Steve Jordan on drums, and Waddy Wachtel on guitar, was the real deal next to Jagger's superficial solo efforts. Ragged, bluesy rockers like "Take it So Hard" and "How I Wish" revealed a confident and rejuvenated Richards—which undoubtedly pissed off Jagger to no end, because by the time Keith was ready to release the album, the singer phoned up his guitarist pal of nearly 30 years and wanted to make nice again. Fine, Richards told Jagger, we can make nice, we can even be Stones again, *after* I do my solo tour. For once, Jagger had to let Keith have things his way.

With their solo joneses out of their systems, and more importantly, having realized that they were better together than apart, Mick and Keith regrouped the Stones for 1989's *Steel Wheels*. Produced by the Glimmer Twins and Chris Kimsey, it was a solid if not spectacular set of mature rockers ("Mixed Emotions") and fine ballads ("Slipping Away"). But the *Steel Wheels/Urban Jungle* tour, which set a then-new record for grosses, was a justified celebration by a band that had come so close to imploding on so many occasions. Having weathered drugs, arrests, riots, deaths, divorces, wealth, bankruptcy and one another, it seemed now as if the only uncharted waters the Stones had to face was old age. They will...if they ever grow up.

BELOW: HOUSTON, TX, ON JULY 19, 1978 RIGHT: KEITH SHOT FOR *BRITISH GQ* IN JANUARY 1993

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The Mojo Man *Rocks Out*

BY GENE SANTORO

REPRINTED FROM *GUITAR WORLD*, MARCH 1986

KEITH RICHARDS: THE GUITAR WORLD INTERVIEW

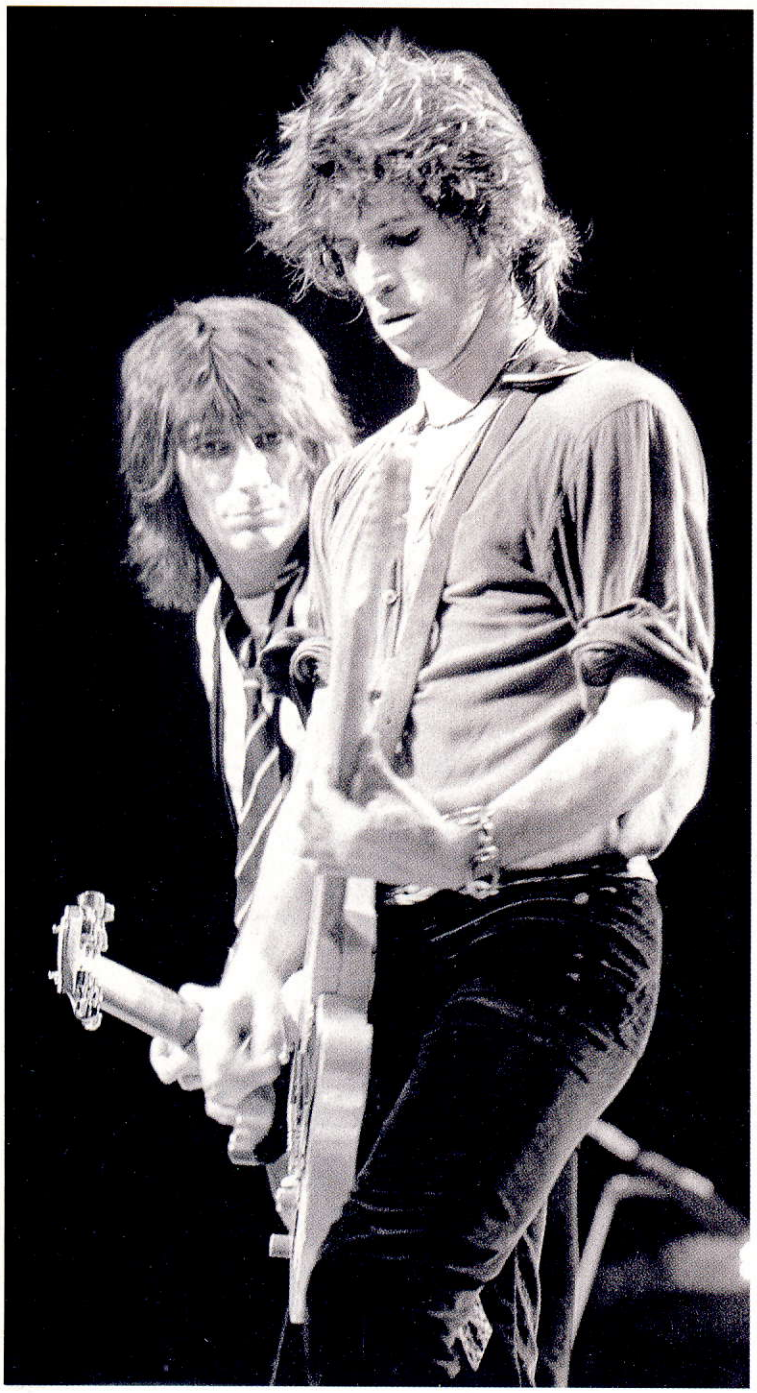
It was a time of deep, festering acrimony within the Stones camp when Keith Richards first sat down with *Guitar World*. Although the band was in the last stages of recording the feisty *Dirty Work*, they were *this* close to being in in the last stages of the group itself. Mick Jagger's first solo album, *She's the Boss*, pissed off the band to no end, all of whom questioned the singer's reasons for making the record in the first place. The situation came to a head when Jagger showed up for the *Dirty Work* sessions, preoccupied with the new demands of his fledgling solo career and without his usual batch of songs.

So Keith Richards dug in his heels and got down to business, working closely with Ron Wood, Bill Wyman, Charlie Watts and whoever else happened to be handy in the studio. Eventually, Mick got the message and started contributing, but the damage had already been done: He had crossed Keith Richards, his partner of over 30 years. This is especially noteworthy because, as everybody surely knows, the first rule of rock and roll is this: Never Cross Keith Richards. (The second, third and fourth rules of rock and roll are pretty much like the first.)

In this extensive interview with writer Gene Santoro, a loquacious Richards holds forth on a host of topics: his early blues influences, the guitar alchemy of the Rolling Stones' sound, building the perfect riff, the painstaking process of creating *Dirty Work*, and his then-growing frustrations working with Mick Jagger. »

GUITAR WORLD *You've said that the guitar is the symbol of rock and roll—something you've had a lot to do with. Who were the major influences on your sound? Obviously Chuck Berry was important...*

KEITH RICHARDS *Yeah. I guess number one and the most lasting. I think you could define it even further: I would say the Chuck Berry records from '56 to, say, "Stir Time." [pauses] Chuck. [laughs] In particular, the sound he got on*



that string of records—I guess it was two-track mono—still astounds me. I mean, I don't listen to them in particular anymore, but when they crop up on a stack of records or tapes they still *electrify* me. I *still* stop almost as if it's the first time I've heard it. Obviously it's not quite the same [*laughs*], 'cause I've been through it fairly extensively. But if the guitar is the symbol of rock and roll as an *instrument*, then those sorts of records are a symbol of rock and roll as a *sound*, as rock and roll records. Which is why nobody bothers to cover them: great rock and roll songs are very strange in that unlike songs previous—pop songs and standards, where if it's a good song *every*body'll have a bash at it—with rock and roll I think it's more the *record* than the actual *song*. The song itself may be just a straight 12-bar blues, but with a certain definable riff that's so outstanding and a sound, a *feel* that comes off of the grooves and is so unique that everybody will have a bash at those songs to play 'em live, maybe stick 'em on an album here or there.

But nobody *seriously* tries to recut "Heartbreak Hotel" or "Great Balls of Fire" or "Lucille" [*laughs*] and expects to get away with it. You learn how to play all those things and play 'em throughout the years, but you don't attempt to out*do* them because they *are* that sound. And so getting back to Chuck, that particular string of hits he did from "Maybellene" up to that album *Rockin' at the Hop* is the body of work that defines rock and roll, to me. That's the kind of stuff I cut my teeth on. Scotty Moore and all that early Elvis stuff too, though once the Army got Elvis he never quite recaptured it. Those records he made with Scotty Moore and Bill Black and DJ Fontana were *it* because those guys were a *band*, *his* band. He was one of the most amazing white cats I ever heard. I mean, to cut Ray Charles' "I Got a Woman" and actually *cut* Ray Charles on that song, at 19 years old with a trio of white guys in Nashville, is pretty astounding, looking back on it.

GW Then there were all the r&b guys like Jimmy Reed and Bo Diddley.

RICHARDS Oh yeah. I suppose the guys that Elvis and Carl Perkins and all *those* cats were listening to then, I cut my teeth on as well. Crossover stuff, you know. [*laughs*]

GW You've become a guitar hero yourself without taking 14-minute solos or any of that.

RICHARDS If I am a guitar hero, I never really entered the competition—I forgot to fill in the application form. [*laughs*] I've never thought of myself as being in that league, that particular game—you know, the fastest-gun-in-the-west sort of thing. With players like that, their audiences expect it and draw them into it. I've always seen what I do as oiling the machinery for the Stones, acting as a catalyst, or bashing out something and finding a catalyst in what one of the other guys in the band is doing. It depends on the day, the song, the mood: I might play something that I think is crap for 10 minutes, and suddenly Charlie or Ronnie will kick in with something that'll turn it right around

LEFT: RON & KEITH PERFORMING WITH THE NEW BARBARIANS AT THE LOS ANGELES FORUM, MAY 19, 1979. RIGHT: KEITH IN 1964

LEFT: MICHAEL OCHS. RIGHT: MONITOR PICTURE LIBRARY/RETNA UK

> *"If I'm a* **GUITAR HERO**, *I never entered the competition— I forgot to fill in the application form."*

and give me a whole new vision. And so the song is *born*. [*laughs*] But as far as the guitar hero thing, if there's anything like that sticking to me, it's just because I've been around so goddamn long. [*laughs*]

GW And yet, the minute you hear the first bar from "Satisfaction" or "Start Me Up," or about 50 other Stones songs, you know instantly who it is.

RICHARDS Well, I guess that's true. You can either look upon that as highly individualistic or as, "Goddamn it, he can play only three things." [*laughs*] *I'm* still not sure what it is, but it doesn't seem to make much difference what guitar I pick up. Whether it's a Gretsch Country Gentleman or a Japanese copy of a Stratocaster or a '53 Telecaster, give me five minutes and I'll make 'em all sound the same. [*laughs*]

GW That in itself is an art.

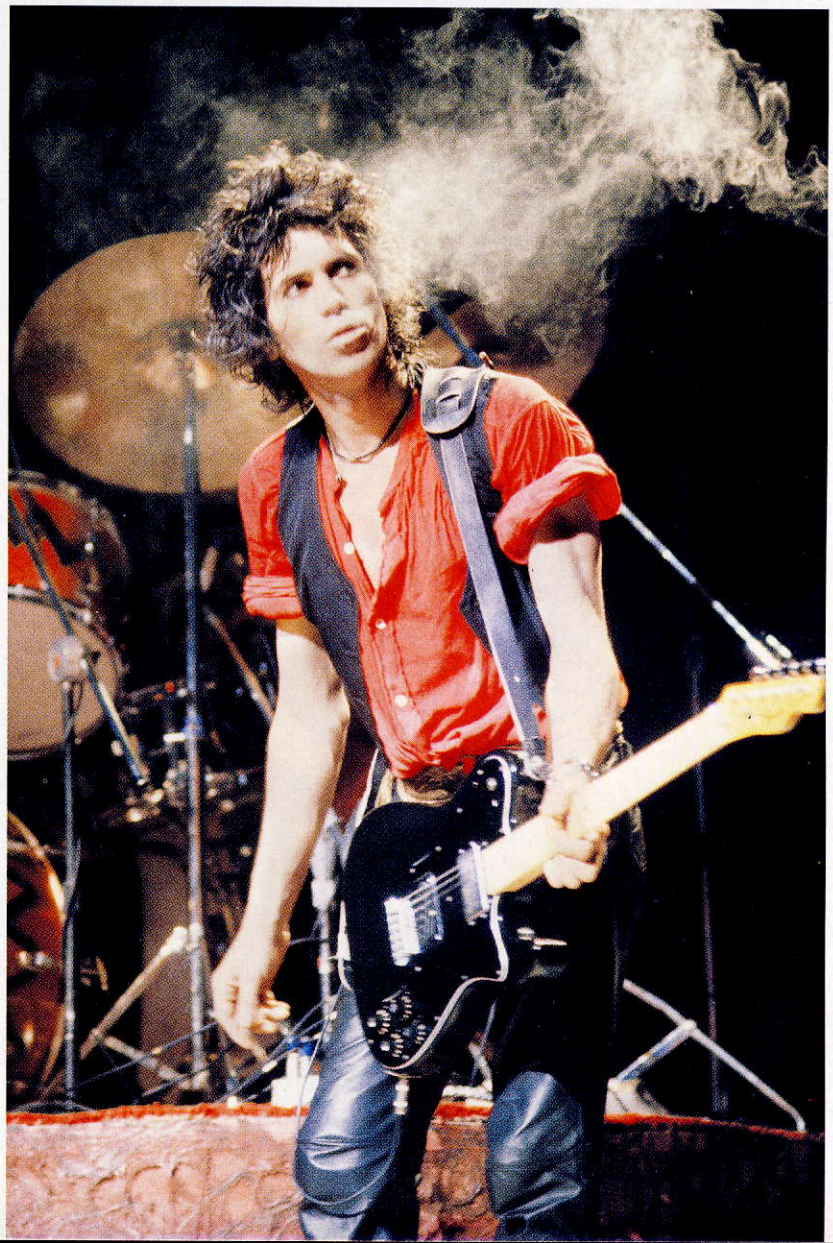
RICHARDS It's because I really *demand* the same sound. Working with a small unit like the Stones for so long, you do naturally find your own niche: you know what you've got to do and go straight for *that* to drive the rest of the band. Everything I do really is connected with kicking off the band as a whole, to get the whole thing passed around the band until it comes back to me at a point where it turns *me* on again. Let the circle be unbroken. [*laughs*]

GW In the process of doing that, you come up with those killer licks that define whole songs.

RICHARDS Yeah, working from a lot of suspensions, especially with a high-strung guitar. I still use different tunings that I like to play around with, mostly open G. I tend to leave open D and E to Ronnie for slide. That's another thing that's happened with him: since he plays slide so well, I don't tend to do as much as I used to. Sometimes *we* can't even tell who did what. We'll look at each other and say, "Which side are *you* on?" [*laughs*]

GW How have you changed what you do in the course of working with three different guitarists in the Stones?

RICHARDS It's hard to say in specific terms because the changes happened so gradually. You know, you play with a guy and things happen. I started off with Brian [*Jones*] and we formulated a division of labor based on Jimmy Reed and Chuck Berry and a few rock and roll overtones from Buddy Holly and Eddie Cochran thrown in. And of course, the basic Chicago blues: the two guitars of the Muddy Waters band, Howlin' Wolf, Little Walter, any of those guys. They got us into the way two or more guitars could work together. I guess it comes from growing up in an era of mono and two-track records where everything was just thrown together. It wasn't so easy to tell which guitar was doing what on particular things, and so you'd just sort of pick out a part. The interesting thing for me as a guitarist has always been to make a sound that *flows* and to play with somebody to the point where you try to fool them and you can't. Ronnie and I do that: nine times out of 10 he'll switch with me if I go from one chord to another, or go from rhythm to lead. It's getting to those points that interest me more than virtuoso leads. I mean, I *love* to play a great solo—when it comes off I'm very proud of myself [*laughs*]—but it's not a big kick for me to leap all over the fretboard. I love playing *chords*. Chords *fascinate* me, the way you can move just one finger and change the whole sound of the chord, or even change the sound of a whole record just by shifting a bottom-string suspension, for instance. And I don't even know what half of them are called because I'll be working on five-string [*in G tuning*], then regular tuning; if I'm working on a concert-tuning overdub over a five-string track I have to learn the whole thing *again* be-



KEITH IN 1979

HENRY DILTZ/CORBIS

PRIME CUTS

KEITH ON "MOTHER'S LITTLE HELPER"

THE MAIN RIFF is a 12-string with a slide on it. It's played slightly Orientalish. This was even before sitars were used in rock music. It just needed something to make it twang, 'cause otherwise the song was quite vaudeville in a way. And it was just one of those things where somebody walked in with it and we went, "Look, it's an electric 12-string." It was just some gashed-up job. God knows where it came from or where it went, but I put it together with a bottleneck and we had a riff that tied the whole song together. There's probably some gypsy influence in there somewhere.

cause I don't know what the chords' names are. [*laughs*]

GW How do you arrange the Stones' material?

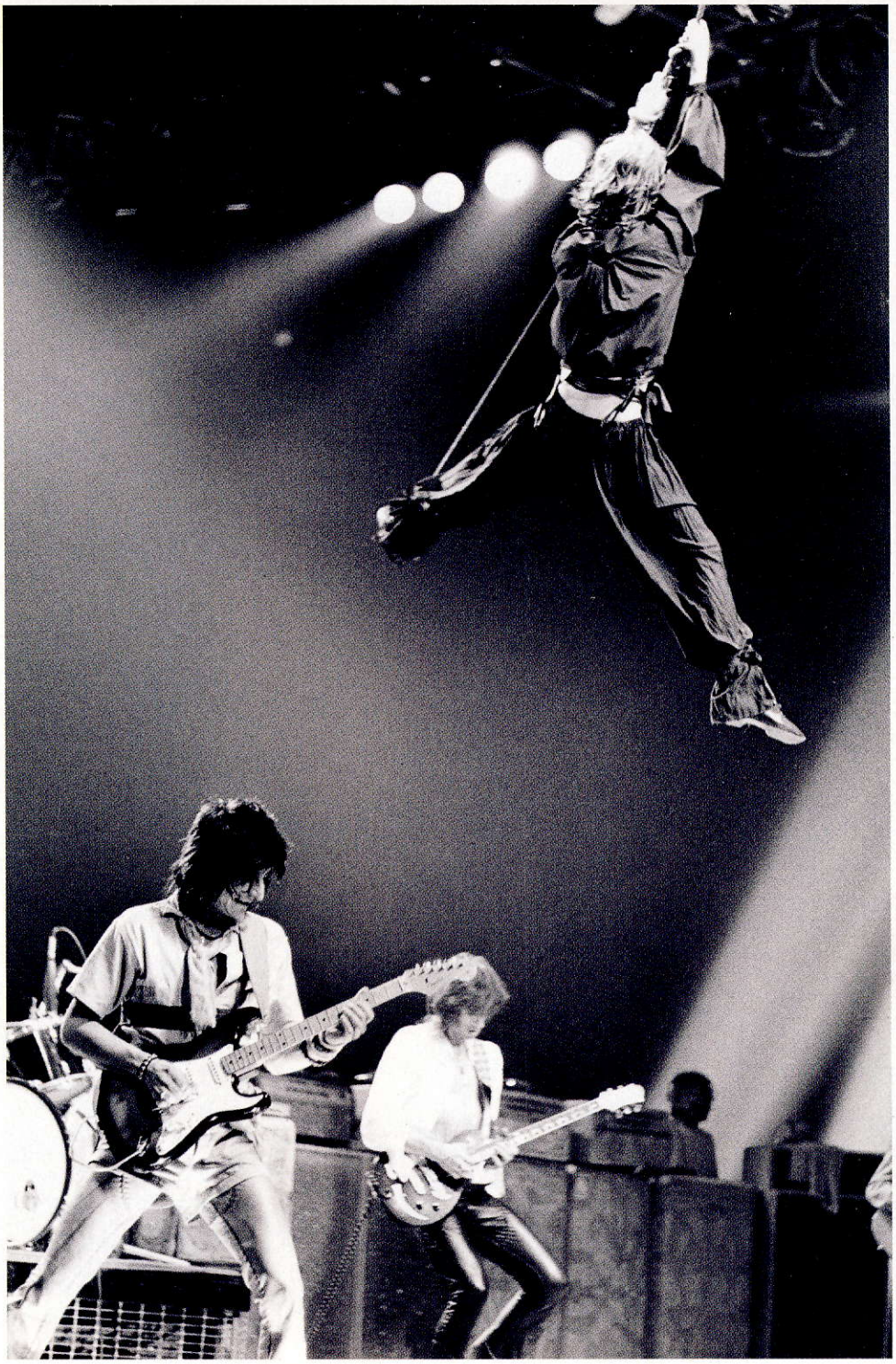
RICHARDS The way our songs are built has stayed pretty much the same: *I* have to make it first, enough to play it over and over again and again until I've found what I'm looking for. I never *know* what it is I'm looking for, exactly, but when I hit upon it, I know it. Then, if *I* like it I can turn on the rest of the band or even get just one person to say, "Yeah," then I get some feedback. I've never aimed for anything, particularly: I don't sit around playing the same lick for three hours trying to get one particular thing down. I'm just working, chipping away at it, more like a sculptor. [*mimics*] "No, his nose isn't that big"—*whack*. [*laughs*] No, it isn't that small either, so *whack* a bit of putty back on, you know. You keep patching it up until it feels natural. Nobody *creates* these things: you've just got to be awake with your finger in the air like an antenna. But what I look for to tell me it's right is the smile on Charlie's face. I mean, the band'll be standing in the corner telling jokes for a couple of hours and then suddenly one of 'em'll come over and start playing, and I'll think, Aha, [*laughs*] somebody's taken the bait. And if everybody else joins in and starts getting into it, I'll think, Okay, that's the first thing; I've turned myself on, now turn the band on. After that, it's time to turn the world on. [*laughs*] Start small.

GW Was the working process you've described any different when Mick Taylor was in the band?

RICHARDS It was more definable, I guess, especially onstage; there was a rhythm and a lead. As I say, I love playing rhythm and chords so I'll never have a problem with, "Oh, you get all the solos"—that sort of thing. Besides, if I say I'm going to take the solo on this song, I'm going to take the solo on this song and that's it. [*laughs*] But generally speaking, with Mick, especially live, things were much more cut-and-dried, separated. In the studio I'd usually overlay three, four guitars, bits here and there, so that *that* process wasn't so different from working in the studio now.

GW You'd started doing a lot of overdubbing toward the end of the period Brian was in the band.

RICHARDS Oh, yeah. Brian had pretty much given up on the guitar. The farther along the Sixties got, Brian grew less and less interested in playing the guitar. It got to the point that if there was an instrument around he *had* to be able to get *some*thing out of it, just because it was there, you know; strange. Which at that point was actually a great thing, because it gave the Stones on record a lot of different textures and sounds we wouldn't have done otherwise; it gave the group a much wider musical base to work with. Marimbas on "Under My Thumb," things like that, little touches that make you think all the time, Oh, he's gonna play the bloody *marimbas*, [*laughs*] but then afterward you think, Yeah, right, that did it. Ronnie's like that too, except he still likes to play the guitar. He's a real jack-of-all-trades; if there's an instrument around, he's got to play it, pedal steel, saxophone, even drums on one track on the new album.



LIVE IN 1975

GW You and Woody have both played bass on a fair number of studio cuts. What prompts you to pick up the bass and play it?

RICHARDS I still love to hear that *thump*, [*grins*] make that noise, deep and big. Sometimes if I've written a song and I can't quite communicate it to Bill, or to anybody else—I know what I want but I can only *play* it, I can't describe it—I'll just say, "Okay, I'll knock it down for now, then if you work it out, do it." A lot of times I'll put a bass line down and then Bill or Ronnie will get the hang of it and record it that way, and other times it'll stay the way I did it because nobody can play as looney as I can. [*laughs*]

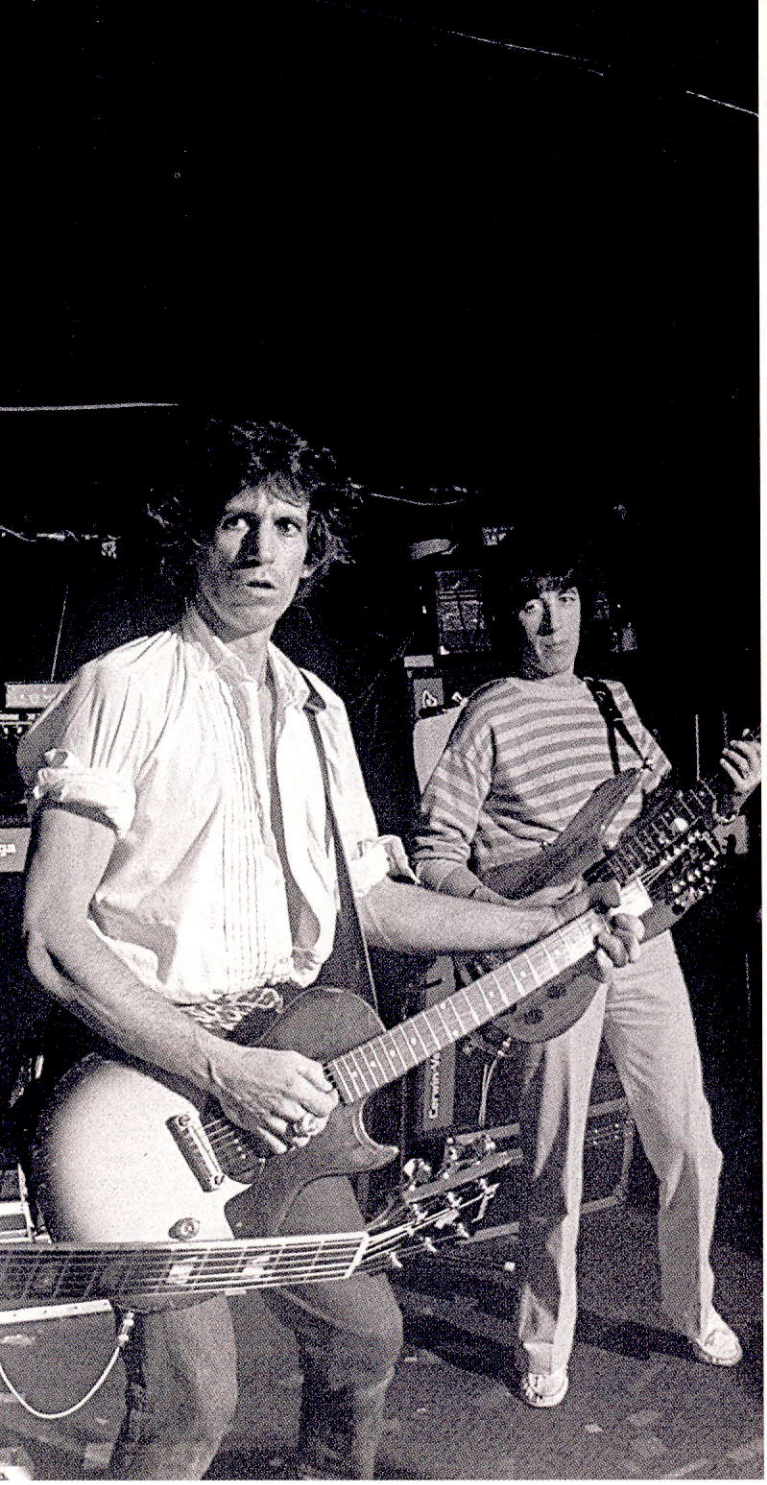
GW From the beginning, you've used a lot of acoustic guitar on record.

PERFORMING AT SIR MORGAN'S COVE IN WORCESTER, MA, 1981

RICHARDS That was drawing on the fact that I'd done an awful lot of guitar playing at art school. At the time I was in with people who played Leadbelly and Woody Guthrie and Ramblin' Jack Elliot, so that's what I learned. But I still never try to get too far from the acoustic guitar. I figure that one day, when they run out of electricity, I won't have to rely on *feedback* to keep the lick going. [*laughs*] Usually, I don't *touch* an electric guitar at home; I work basically on acoustic. For me it really pays off, especially with chords: the acoustic's much truer, and you can't rely on electronic *tricks* like sustain to make yourself sound flashy. You've got to play it dead right, so I find it keeps me precise. I think every guitar player should take time out to play the acoustic, *especially* flamboyant guitar players. [*laughs*]

GW What kinds of things do you do to practice or loosen up?

RICHARDS I get the rest of them out of bed. [*laughs*] See, when you're the *Rolling Stones*, when you've been *that* big for *that* long, the immediate result is that you don't want to work that much. You're either working your nuts off, like now, [*smiles*] or else you're doing absolutely nothing. It's a real stop/start affair. That's one of my—I don't want to say excuses—reasons for turning to dope in the Seventies, to calm myself down. It was the only way I could stop the adrenalin. You know, you stop a tour and *whack*, nothing for a year, then record for six months. I could never get the gears right on that part of myself—I guess I was using the dope as a kind of synchro-mesh, [*laughs*] or else I was trying to get on automatic. [*laughs*] But that's all in the past.



JERRY SCHATZBERG/CORBIS

The great thing about Ronnie and me is that we really don't stop working. We're pretty much around the corner from each other all the time, and he *loves* playing. So we've made a point in the last year or two—this is what I mean, we did our last tour *three years ago*—of going 'round to each other's place two or three nights a week and play. That way, we've kept the playing and the ideas flowing, so that there's much more *continuity* in the things we're doing. At least that's what I feel: we didn't just arrive cold turkey to start this record. The only difference was changing from acoustic to electric. It took me a couple of weeks to get used to the power of an electric guitar, especially full blast in the studio.

GW You've been called the Stones' musical director...

RICHARDS If I ever called myself that, I'd be fired immediately. [*laughs*]

GW But whenever anybody else in the band is asked who they follow, the answer is you.

RICHARDS Probably because for the vast majority of the songs the riffs start with me, so if it falls apart they can all look at me and say, "It's *your* fault." [*laughs*] That's the thing about all the little subtle shifts in rhythm that we do. We've been playing together long enough now that we play games. I can throw in an extra half-bar here and there and everybody will *know*; even if I throw in a quarter-bar Charlie will just flick it over. Those are the things you can't really learn, because it's just a matter of experience.

GW Sounds like the Muddy Waters band.

RICHARDS [*laughs*] That's funny, because that's the point the Stones are at right now, if they want to be. It's a real interesting position, because we can make the damn thing grow *up*. We're the only ones around that've kept it together this long. Is there a point in being a rock and roll band after 20-odd years? Can you make it grow up gracefully? Can you get it to mature and make sense? [*pauses*] I guess what I'm saying is that I love doing it, and we're at a point now where we'd like to make it grow up with us.

GW That mature interplay you're describing is the really striking thing about your recent tours and *Still Life*, the way each of you will come down on different beats at different points, for instance.

RICHARDS Yeah, [*laughs*] you're dead right. See, night after night the show has to be the same, just from the point of view of the lights and the sound guys: if you suddenly go into something they don't expect, you'll get lavender lights coming down on you in the middle of "Tutti-Frutti" while the sound guys go berserk. So you're *stuck* in a fairly rigid framework, if the shows are going to work smoothly. The only way you can get your extra rocks off, really, is to chip around with the band or see what happens when some accident occurs. [*mimics*] "I wonder how they're gonna get out of *this*." [*laughs*] Then you hear it and think, Hmmm, not bad, and so you start flinging little things at each other, just to keep everybody on their toes. Some of the curve balls I throw at Charlie or Ronnie or Bill, if I threw them at anybody else, no matter how good they were, *I'd* be out in the cold or *they* would. [*laughs*] As I say, those are the sort of things that, if you tried to work them out, they'd sound forced and false; it just comes from playing together all those years. It's one of the main strengths of the Stones, one of the edges we've got, probably the most important; we can do things younger bands still have to learn, if they can stick together that long. There's *loads* of good bands, but there aren't many good bands that stay together long enough to become great bands.

GW The obvious question is what effects Mick Jagger's solo album has had within the band.

RICHARDS First off, I thought it should've been something that he *really* wanted to do that he couldn't *possibly* do with the Stones.

PRIME CUTS

KEITH ON "GIMMIE SHELTER"

THAT WAS DONE on some nameless Australian full-bodied acoustic [*a Maton*]. It looked like a copy of the Gibson model that Chuck Berry used. The thing had all been revarnished and painted out, but it just sounded great. Some guy crashed out at my pad for a couple of days, then suddenly split in a hurry and left that guitar behind, like, "take care of this for me." I certainly did. At the very last note of the take, the whole neck fell off. You can hear it on the original track. That guitar had just that one little quality for that specific thing. In a way, it was quite poetic that it died at the end of the track.

DRESSED IN DRAG AS PROMOTION FOR "HAVE YOU SEEN YOUR MOTHER, BABY, STANDING IN THE SHADOW," IN NEW YORK CITY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1966

I thought the timing was strange, to bring out something like that, an obvious commercial record, just as we were starting to record this record. I mean, if it'd been his favorite Irish folk songs with a lady harpist—something you couldn't do with the Stones or anybody else, something you've been *dying* to do for 20 years and really want to get off your chest—then fine. You know, Liberace accompanying you on Frank Sinatra songs, whatever. [*laughs*] I did talk to him about it, told him it was dumb timing and not an inspired piece of work. But apart from that it doesn't make any difference. It put a lot of strain on the earlier part of our sessions because it came out and Mick had to be in two places at once, which was sort of weird. [*mimics*] "Where's Mick?" "Oh, he just left, *boom boom*." In a way it didn't hurt, because the band needed the time anyway. It was spent very usefully working up songs and getting used to playing together again. As far as repercussions go, that's about it. To my mind, a Mick Jagger solo record should've been *gi-normous*, not just another record. I said to Mick at the time, "Why don't you just leave this year to Prince and Jackson and Springsteen? Cut a few tracks here and there, work at it slowly until it's finished? Why make yourself a deadline when we fought from the start to say, 'You'll get the record when it's damn well ready'? Why lock yourself in after 20 years of working to the opposite goal?" But he did, and they did, and there you go. But as far as the Stones are concerned, we're making *this* one, time marches on, that's over and done with.

GW Did it affect the way you two came up with material for this one?

RICHARDS It did, I guess, because Mick had virtually used up his entire output of stuff for his solo album. Then, because of the time of its release coinciding with the start of the Stones' recording sessions, and *that* coinciding with what I've told you about Ronnie and I working together and having a whole load of stuff as a result, I just went ahead and got the band worked up on the stuff I'd written. See, I write songs for Mick to sing—that's my job, basically. I'll do a couple here or there, whether because I want to or he thinks I should. But even if I write a song that Mick doesn't particularly like when he first hears it, I know that he *can* sing it. It's just a matter of *interesting* him in a certain song. And then once he gets interested and does it—*boom*, there you go. The thing is that the guy's good, man. [*laughs*] He can sing his ass off.

GW Let's talk about the new album then. You've been working on it a long time.

RICHARDS Nine months, man. We've been sitting in there

PRIME CUTS

KEITH ON "SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL"

MICK BROUGHT that to the studio as a very Bob Dylanish kind of folk guitar song, and it ended up as a damned samba. I think that's the strength of the Stones: give them a song half raw and they'll cook it.

"Whether it's a **GRETSCH COUNTRY GENTLEMAN** *or a* **JAPANESE COPY** *of a Strat or a* **'53 TELECASTER**, *give me five minutes and I'll make them all sound the same."*

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA UK

[*gestures at the control room*] saying, "I feel so *pregnant*, [*laughs*] it's time for it to be born." It's like a baby, you're nursing it along. It gets to where you need some feedback from outside, so you play it for other people and watch them, how they get off on this or that. The ridiculous thing is honing it down, because once we get going I'm a prolific son of a bitch. When we've got to make a record, that means we cut 30, 25 tracks. Not all of them will be in a totally finished state, but there'll be that many songs. Obviously that's a much better position to be in than not having enough, but it creates its own problems, like when you're trying to figure out which ones really work together. Then, putting an album together is another trick of its own, the art of being able to decide how one track follows another so that the whole thing flows. I've known many a good album that hasn't quite made it because somebody put a couple of songs in the wrong position so something that obviously should've started side one turns up in the middle of side two and just doesn't have the impact. And the problems go right down to the very *end* of an album: credits [*mimics*] "Who played bass on...? What was the name of the guy who played keyboards?" But that's what we fought for when we started, the right to deliver the finished product in all its glory, take it or leave it. Now since we've *won* that battle, it's stupid to give it up, which means you have to sit on everything to the very end. Even to what sticker you're going to put on the cellophane—sur*prise* me, boys. [*laughs*] How are you going to display this record? But unless you check those things out, you end up with the Cookie Monster holding it up in the middle of the store—you never know. [*laughs*]

GW The tunes have that kick-ass edge that's there on the best Stones records.

RICHARDS I think so, yeah. I wanted to put out a real *Stones* album, which we always manage to do in odd periods. This was a real concentrated effort. We left a lot of good stuff, interesting stuff, in the can because everyone wanted to—if we could, it could be done again—make a classic Stones record with certain themes that have recurred over the years, both musically and lyrically. Also, You just get the band to the point where you think you're going to break new ground and then come the pressures of business and worries about overexposure. And there's the absolutely *gi-normous* task of getting the Stones either on the road or in the studio, which all has to be massively pre-planned. So if this one works like I've hoped it would, it'll be mainly—not only, but mainly—because Ronnie and I *didn't* stop this time. And Bill, Charlie, Mick, we've all been working instead of just laying fallow waiting for the Stones to gear up again, to get re-tooled. [*laughs*] The fact that everyone has been more active has given this record much more of an edge, more of a defined feel as the Rolling Stones, because we didn't have to go in there and start from ground zero. It has a sort of coherence about it, more than anything since maybe *Some Girls*, for me.

GW What kind of stuff do you listen to these days?

RICHARDS Everything. I might listen to Beethoven, I might listen to "Roll Over Beethoven," it's that diverse. I like Irish folk music, Billie Holiday, Louis Armstrong—and Lenny Bruce. [*laughs*]

GW What do you think of the current crop of musicians?

RICHARDS There's a lot of talent out there, and you can't keep it down. But the rest of the talent is being able to deal with the rest of the bullshit, the twists and turns of the [*hisses*] *music business*. Even down to the wonderful ladies in Washington. [*laughs*] There are people who are just straightforward musicians who can't deal with that, and if they try they end up accidental deaths or suicides or whatever. *That* is what takes up most of your time, though, not the music and the act of making music—*that's* pure pleasure. The work comes in dealing with the entertainment industry. Between us and the audience there's no problem; the problem is the middlemen. They don't like me to say that; they'll say, [*mimics*] "You don't mean *me*, do you?" And I'll say, "No, I wasn't talking about *you*." And in fact, it's not really their fault, it's the structure of things. The go-betweens—record companies, agents—are generally people very good at selling things. That's why they have been hired. So because some guy sold more baked beans than anybody else in the whole Northwest he's in the record business now, because to these people it's *units*, and it doesn't make a difference if it's baked beans or music. But there is a subtle difference. [*laughs*]

KEITH FLYING FROM SCOTLAND IN 1976

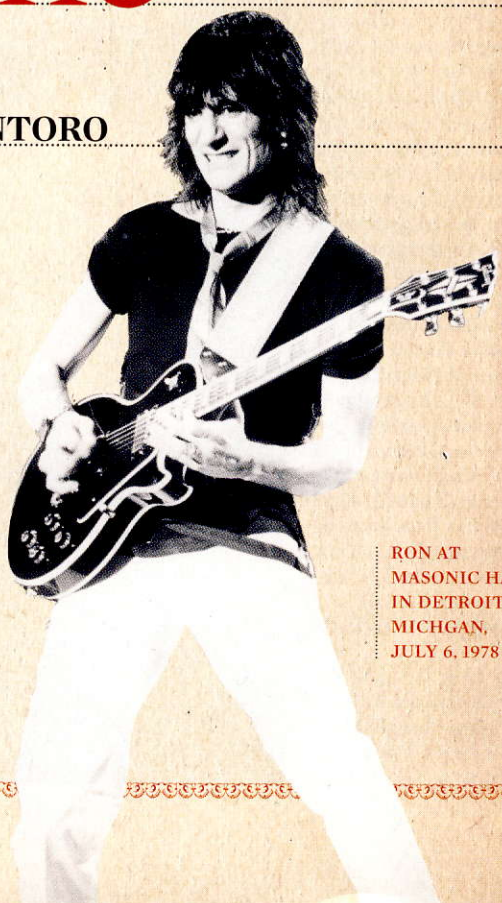
RON WOOD

REPRINTED FROM
GUITAR WORLD,
MARCH 1985

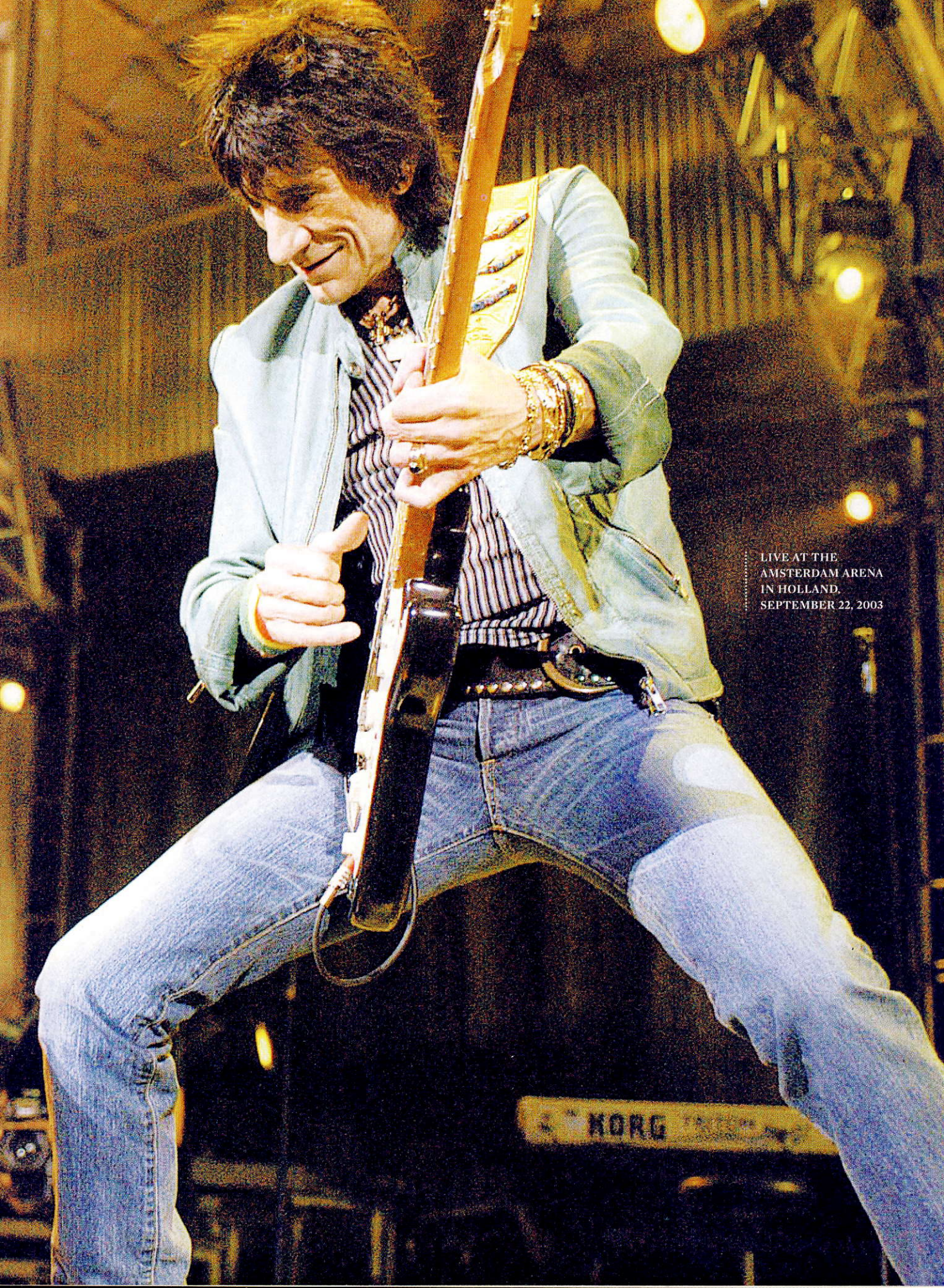
Third *Stone* from the Sun

BY GENE SANTORO

AFTER KEITH AND MICK, "WOODY" IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THE ROLLING STONES' MUSIC. IN THIS TYPICALLY RAMBLING INTERVIEW, THE GUITAR SHARPSHOOTER SURVEYS HIS CAREER AS A ROCK AND ROLL CORNERSTONE.

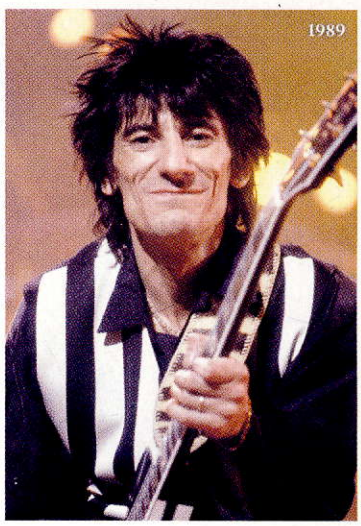


RON AT MASONIC HALL IN DETROIT, MICHGAN, JULY 6, 1978



LIVE AT THE AMSTERDAM ARENA IN HOLLAND, SEPTEMBER 22, 2003

Some people have talent. Others have an uncanny ability to always be in the right place at the right time. And then there's Ron Wood, who possesses both natural musical ability and that certain *je ne sais quoi* that charms all those who come in contact with him. Since the mid Sixties, he's been one of the most sought-after sidemen in rock and roll. He first became known as the bassist with the Jeff Beck Group (fronted by the then-unknown singer Rod Stewart). Later, he switched back to his first instrument, the six-string guitar, and began a partnership with the then-very-well-known Rod Stewart in the Small Faces (the group soon shortened its name to simply the Faces). For four years, the party-hearty group tore it up both onstage and off, becoming the biggest British band to never fully make it in the States.



When Rod Stewart broke up the Faces and went solo in 1974, Wood was again right where he needed to be—at a party (of course) where Mick Jagger took the guitarist aside and informed him that Mick Taylor was quitting the Rolling Stones. With a world tour looming, the Stones had no time to wait: did Wood want the gig? He's been with the band ever since.

In this free-wheeling interview with writer Gene Santoro, Wood speaks of his early influences, his career as both a bassist and guitarist, the wild days with the Faces, and how he "gave a huge kick in the ass" to the Rolling Stones.

RON AND MICK AT OMNI COLISEUM IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA, JULY 30, 1975

GUITAR WORLD *You started playing guitar when you were eight or so. Why the guitar? How did you start?*

IN NEW YORK CITY ON AUGUST 5, 1988

RON WOOD *My older brothers had a very interesting influence on me, because I followed their paths into music and art school.* I was lucky enough not to have to idolize an accountant. [*laughs*] The semi-detached houses in the part of London where I grew up are very small; they all have two floors with two rooms and a kitchen on the first floor and two rooms and this little box room upstairs. So when my brothers were at art school I was about the same age as my boy Jesse, who's eight; and I would look through the hatch in the kitchen and watch all the art school guys and their girlfriends. I didn't understand what they were doing with the girls [*laughs*], but I liked what they were doing with the guitars and the old string bass, a tea-chest bass, so I didn't watch through the hatch for long. My middle brother was into pure traditional jazz—Bix Beiderbecke and Louis Armstrong—which I still love to this day, and he first introduced me to playing skulls and woodblocks. My older brother, Art, though, was more in touch with the kind of thing I later moved on to. He bought me my first 78s of things like "Great Balls of Fire," "I'm Walkin'," "Shame Shame Shame" by Jimmy Reed. He also turned me onto Howlin' Wolf—Hubert Sumlin is a great guitarist. Art had a skiffle

TOP LEFT: PAUL NATKIN/IMAGE DIRECT; BOTTOM LEFT: TOM HILL/WIREIMAGE.COM; RIGHT: JONATHAN POSTAL/ZUMA PRESS

> *"**JEFF BECK** was always after one thing, which was to **BLOW MINDS**—and he used to blow mine much too often."*

band with the tea-chest and a washboard, which is what I made my stage debut on at the age of nine, between two Tommy Steele films at the local cinema. I was just as nervous then as I am now when I go on.

Anyway, the guitar player in that band was called Lawrence Sheef. He was playing lots of Elmore James stuff, which I still love, and he could play exactly like Big Bill Broonzy—in some cases better. Then Jim Willis taught me from a banjo aspect—he played very good banjo and a fat old f-hole guitar, an Eddie Condon kind of thing. With the combination of those two showing me things I don't know *how* I ended up sounding like I do [*laughs*]. But the thing is Lawrence's mastery and fast fingering used to blow me away.

Pretty soon after that my mind was blown by a drummer named Colin Little, who introduced me to Chuck Berry

ROD STEWART (LEFT) AND RON WOOD IN 1970

imports. Colin was also playing in my brother Art's band. So was Charlie Watts. So were Jack Bruce, Dick Heckstall-Smith, Alexis Korner, Keef Hartley, Nicky Hopkins, Jon Lord. They used to play at a little pub called Station Hotel in Harrow.

GW Did you ever have formal lessons?

WOOD No, I picked it all up by ear. I had some charts written out—you know, where to put your fingers on the neck—by Jim and Lawrence, but it was mainly watching them and learning Chuck Berry's riffs. Then after I'd finished learning that, I'd put on either Buddy Holly or Kenny Burrell, when he was playing with Jimmy Smith, or Grant Green, when he was playing with Jimmy McGriff: *he* had a really weird style. Wes Montgomery I used to really dig, even though I couldn't play in octaves—I used to struggle away there. But I used to sew all those up by heart, and they still stick with me today.

GW Your first bands did a lot of r&b stuff.

WOOD Well, my first band was the Thunderbirds, later the Birds. Then when the Byrds came over with "Mr. Tambourine Man," our cheap manager sued them because he said that they stole our name. It was the first publicity we ever got: we were on the front page of the *Melody Maker*, but it was a cheap way of getting publicity. Anyway, we use to do "Leaving Here" by Eddie Hollander, "No Good Without You Baby" by Marvin Gaye, which I still think is a great song, things like that. I used to write all the b-sides then. The first song I wrote, called "You're on My Mind," I stole from "A Certain Girl" by the Yardbirds, which *really* turned me on. Then at that point we fell out of the hands of Robert Stigwood, who decided to make a massive cultural change to the name of our group and call it the Birds Birds. [*laughs*] We were on his Reaction label; the Who were on it too. At the same time the Cream were just starting up. We used to have some wild parties up there: I remember Clapton clipping off Stigwoood's tie and I tied Brian Epstein up. [*laughs*] Actually, the end of that band was a bit like the end of the Jeff Beck Group, because it was just turning sour.

GW How did you hook up with Beck?

WOOD See, I found out the Yardbirds had broken up, and I knew Jeff from meeting him at various clubs. So I rang him up when he left. Something a lot of people don't know is that when I first joined the Jeff Beck Group I played guitar along with Jeff, and we have Dave Ambrose, who used to play with Brian Auger, on bass. Jeff couldn't take him, though, so he asked me, Would you mind switching to bass? And I said, "Nothing could suit me better, because I'm so stagnant on guitar at the moment that I've really run out of direction." So I thought, Maybe I'll get something else from the bass.

GW I've heard you copped your first bass by just walking out with it from a music store.

WOOD Yeah, I went to Selmer's because we were rehearsing around the corner from there. I picked out this Fender Jazz Bass, which I've still got, and I filled out all the papers, but I was too young, so my parents had to be the guarantors for the payment. So we left it that they would come down the following day and I would borrow the bass for an hour. I went down and paid them years later. [*laughs*] I also used a Danelectro six-string for a while. I liked them because they were easily replaceable. Townshend used to go through them like crazy. [*laughs*]

GW Who'd you listen to to help you make the transition from guitar to bass?

WOOD Mostly Paul Samwell-Smith. I used to go down to Crawdaddy in Richmond and watch the Yardbirds every week, almost. I used to love Eric's guitar playing and try to copy him. In fact, at the time he was going out with the girl who ended up being my first wife. [*laughs*] But I also learned a lot on the bass just from sticking with Jeff's licks. "Let Me Love You Baby," for instance—that was great to do. And Aynsley Dunbar used to call me back, like when we did "Blues De Luxe," because I used to like hanging back, like I'd learned from the Chicago blues players.

GW What was Beck like to work with?

WOOD I always got along with him fine. He turned me onto the whole series of Chicago blues people. Buddy Guy is still one of my favorites—I just gave him a guitar, one of my Strats. He also turned me onto the Vanilla Fudge, who had a lot to offer when they first came out with that beautiful version of "You Keep Me Hangin' On." But as far as my bass lines, Jeff used to just let me go, because he knew that I was nice enough to stop playing guitar. He could've gotten a few bass players, mind you, but they weren't very inventive.

I always used to play with wirewound strings and a hard

CHRIS WALTERS/PHOTO FEATURES INTERNATIONAL

pick, though I remember I played with an English penny once in Detroit—on someone else's guitar [*laughs*], because mine got lost. It was still a great show: the Grand E Ballroom with foot-long hot dogs. We did all those 2000–3000 seaters: the Kinetc Playground in Philadelphia, Boston Tea Party, Fillmore East and West. In fact, that first appearance at the Fillmore East is what built the Beck Group's reputation. They xeroxed the write-up Robert Shelton gave us in the *New York Times* and bang, the rest of the country was intrigued. Of course, Jeff *was* playing great, and Rod *was* singing great, though those two had more of a thing of not talking to each other. I got on so well with Rod that I joined in the fun as well, but I wouldn't let it go too far because I respected Jeff's more-or-less purist approach to being a great manipulator of his guitar. Last time I saw him, a couple of months ago, he told me he still practices a couple of hours a day, and I can well believe it. But me, I practice when I'm onstage. [*laughs*] No, I keep my chops together, but lately I've been doing more painting than anything else. It'll never take over from the guitar, though; when Keith's in town, for instance, I'm *always* playing with him.

GW You met Jimi Hendrix while you were playing with Beck.

WOOD Yeah, he gave me a dog once, a basset hound. He also gave me his original B.B. King *Live at the Regal*. He used to give me a chance to play solo bass stuff. Of course, I always used to do a bass solo with the Beck Group, but when Jimi and I jammed—once at the Scene, once out on Staten Island—he'd say, "Hey Jeff, let the bass player go, he's got a good feel for it." I saw him the night he went as well; he was in Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club in London. *That* was pretty shattering.

IN KANSAS CITY, MO, IN 1989

GW So what finally ended the Beck Group?

WOOD Well, besides Rod and Jeff not getting along, there was a nice amount of hate between Nicky Hopkins and Jeff, though I suppose a lot of that went into the music. Nicky would always come with the briefcase and the mack. [*laughs*] When there was the final drummer with the group, Tony Newman—a *real* businessman. [*mimicks*] "You mean you're being paid what? Mickie Most is doing what? You need somebody to get organized." And on and on. And so two weeks before Woodstock we all erupted and broke up.

GW Then you moved over to the Faces.

WOOD They were the only band that was Rod's and my favorite. [*The Small Faces'*] *Ogden's Nut Gone Flake* had some real nice songs that were very English, and since Rod and I were in America a lot we used to get kind of homesick and play it a lot. So sure enough, as the Beck Group was breaking up, Marriott was leaving the Small Faces, and so they were kind of stranded. So even though I didn't know him from Adam I rang up Ronnie Lane. [*laughs*] And I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "Nothing." So I said, "I fancy having a play," and he said, "Sure, come over tonight." So we all set up facing away from each other [*laughs*]—except for Rod, who didn't know about it and wasn't there—and it was a completely different kind of thing form Beck. See, I'd been to America and turned the Faces onto the Meters and Gladys Knight; Kenny [*Jones, the Faces' drummer*] got a lot of help out of the drumming on those. There used to be some pretty heavy stuff around then, like Booker T and the MGs; I used to sit for hours with Marriott, actually, and listen to that.

RON AND KEITH IN ATLANTIC CITY, NJ, 1989

PAUL NATKIN/IMAGE DIRECT (THIS PAGE)

"I don't mind ADMITTING I'm a YES-MAN most of the time."

In a way the Small Faces were a kind of English Booker T and the MGs with a hot vocalist. So we fit right together.

We didn't have the resources to get rehearsal premises, so the Stones lent us theirs. And unknown to me, one day Ian Stewart rang up Ronnie Lane while we were there and said, "Listen, Brian [*Jones*] has died, and we'd like to consider Woody for guitar player. And Ronnie says, "Oh no, he's perfectly happy where he is." I didn't find this out until six years later! [*laughs*] But I don't blame Ronnie, because I ended up having a great time with the Faces.

To this day Rod doesn't really understand *why* I quit the Faces; I think at the time he had some intentions of doing something with Mac [*Ian MacLagen, keyboards*] But Ronnie Lane had already quit, so it was all falling apart. They just sat on too many conflicts about inconsequential things until the band blew up. And so I had no other choice than to join that horrible group the Stones.

GW You started playing bottleneck with the Faces.

WOOD Yeah, well, while I was playing bass I heard a lot of things, like "The Weight" by Aretha Franklin with Duane Allman playing. You know, I threw him out of my dressing room once, my idol: he was looking for a beer, but I'd never seen a picture of him so I didn't know who he was; and then he was dead. But he turned me onto playing slide. When I went back to playing guitar again I started straight into it with open-E tuning, and then I realized I could play regular tuning just as well. I'm glad I had that time off on the bass, because it gave me a different angle on guitar.

GW So when you play bottleneck you use a standard tuning?

WOOD I'll use any tuning: open-G, open-E, standard, whatever. I usually use a bottle or a glass or a knife, a Bic lighter, anything that's got kind of a smooth surface. Even that would do [*points at cassette tape case*].

GW Did you pick up any pointers from Beck?

WOOD I never learned much from Beck because I didn't dare look. [*laughs*] He was always going *wild*. He was always after one thing, which was to blow minds—and he used to blow mine much too often. [*laughs*] But I always loved the way he played, and now I think he's hotter than ever.

GW How do the Stones work in the studio?

WOOD They *don't stop*. I was used to bands rehearsing from, say, seven till midnight, but the Stones just never stop. One of the roadies timed Charlie once: 18 hours behind the drums without a piss. It's amazing; they have a great dedication. And Bill Wyman has more right to be pissed off than anybody, because he's just standing there: he might have a vodka-and-orange and a beautiful girl waiting, but she can only wait three days.

GW You're still playing some bass on Stones records.

WOOD Bill asks me too, and even if he doesn't, one of the others will. And then Bill says, "You've got to teach me that. Keith plays bass on "Pretty Beat Up" and I play bass on "I Want to Hold You" and "Emotional Rescue." It's no put-down to Bill—he's solid as a rock, and no one lays back like him. And Charlie—he's just always full of surprises.

GW He comes up with amazing beats.

WOOD Absolutely. But one thing that's very important for anybody that wants to understand the inner workings of *our* band is that Keith calls the tempo shots to Charlie, so Charlie has to follow Keith, and Bill has to follow Charlie. *That's* why you get that kind of chug-a-lug, which has always been there since they started, especially on things like "Last Time" and "It's All Over Now."

GW How do you think you've changed the Stones' sound?

WOOD I've given them a huge kick in the ass, in realistic terms, instead of just being a yes-man. I don't mind admitting I'm a yes-man most of the time, because they've got most of the answers covered. But if I see a no, I'll violently object and make them react.

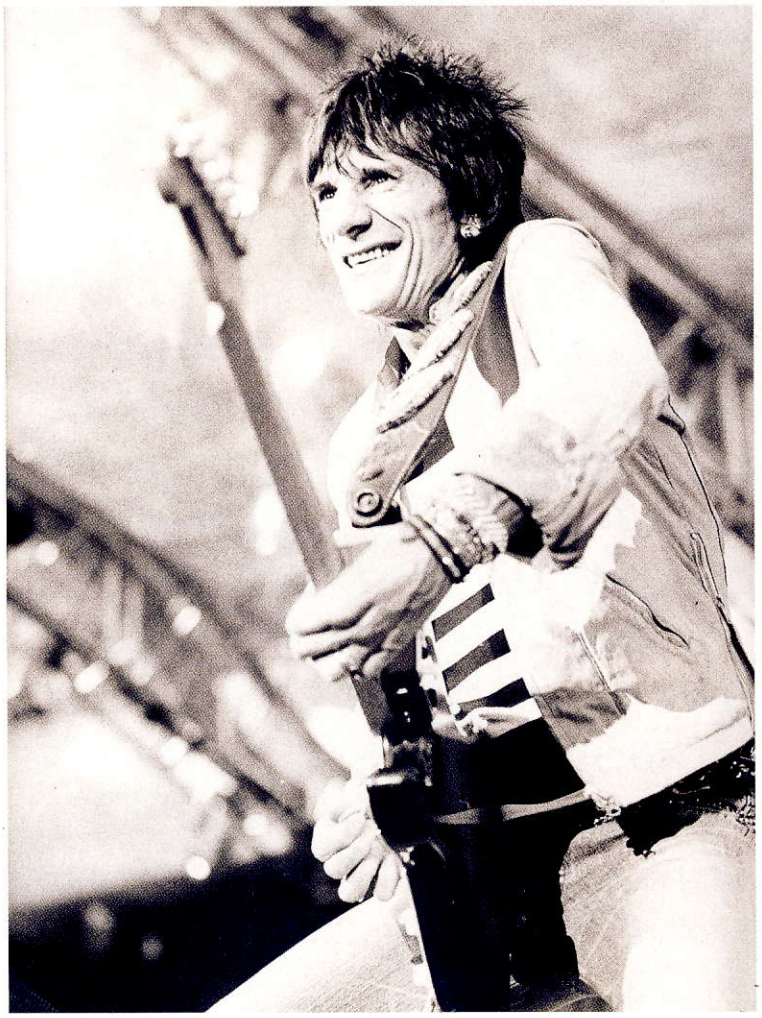
GW Do you have an example?

WOOD Sure. The very first time I went to Munich, I by instinct stopped a song and said, "No, it's got the wrong feel, it's got to be different." Charlie immediately dropped his sticks and said, "That Ronnie, it's got to be him; he's already ordering us about."

GW So you don't feel like a junior member of the Stones?

WOOD Look, it's like Keith said to me once: "You've been a Rolling Stone longer than Mick Taylor, longer even than Brian Jones." After he said that it changed my attitude toward holding back my say, apart from old catalog stuff, which has nothing to do with me *physically* anyway. I mean, I'd played all that stuff in my old bands anyway—"I Wanna Be Your Man," "Mannish Boy," all of it. Wanting to be a Rolling Stone to me was as natural as wanting to be in the Faces or in the Yardbirds—which the Beck Group was an extension of, after all. ✣

LEFT: RON AND MICK IN FRANKFURT, GERMANY, 1976. BELOW: RON IN 2002



LEFT: MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNA UK.; RIGHT: SCARLET PAGE/IDOLS

The Naked Truth

BY GARY GRAFF

ON *STRIPPED*, KEITH RICHARDS AND THE ROLLING STONES UNPLUG THEIR GUITARS AND REVISIT SOME OF THEIR PAST TRIUMPHS.

REPRINTED FROM *GUITAR WORLD*, FEBRUARY 1996

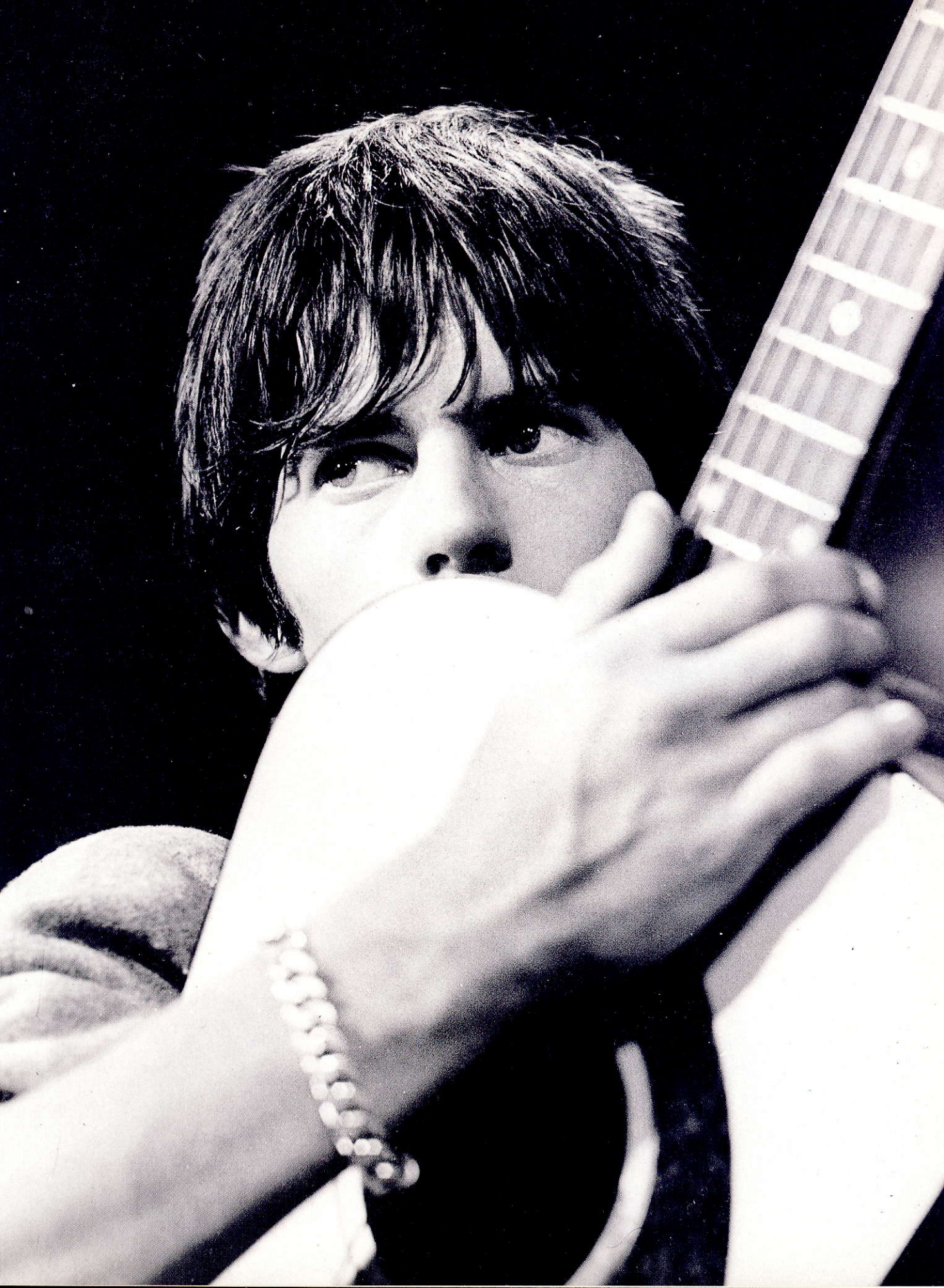
Most grandfathers don't sport silver skull-shaped rings on their fingers. But most grandfathers never electrocuted themselves onstage in front of thousands of people. They never partied with the Hell's Angels, had their names splashed across newspapers for urinating on a gas station wall, or got busted for heroin. Most grandfathers never got a chance to jam with Muddy Waters, nor did they co-write some of the sharpest rock and roll songs the world has ever known. Most grandfathers aren't a Glimmer Twin or a Rolling Stone. That's because most grandfathers aren't Keith Richards.

KEITH IN 1964

When writer Gary Graff sat down with Richards in late 1995, the guitarist was preparing for the birth of his first grandchild. But there was more than just diapers on Richards' mind; there was also the matter of *Stripped*, a Rolling Stones album unlike any previous live release by the band in that it featured a mix of intimate club recordings and live-in-the-studio reinterpretations of some of their best-loved classics, blues standards and a surprising cover tune choice.

In this lively exchange, Keith talks about his undying love of acoustic guitars, reminisces about the *Ed Sullivan Show*, and answers the musical question: How does it *feeeeel*...for a Rolling Stone to play "Like a Rolling Stone"? »

RICHARD YOUNG/REX USA



GUITAR WORLD Stripped *is clearly a different kind of live album for the Stones. Was that the intention from the beginning?*

RON WOOD *At the beginning of the tour, we realized that if we didn't watch out, we'd end up with* Voodoo Lounge Live at the Stadium. Both the band and Virgin Records said, "Nah, enough already." Okay, so now I've got a negative directive; I know what we don't want. But what *do* we want?

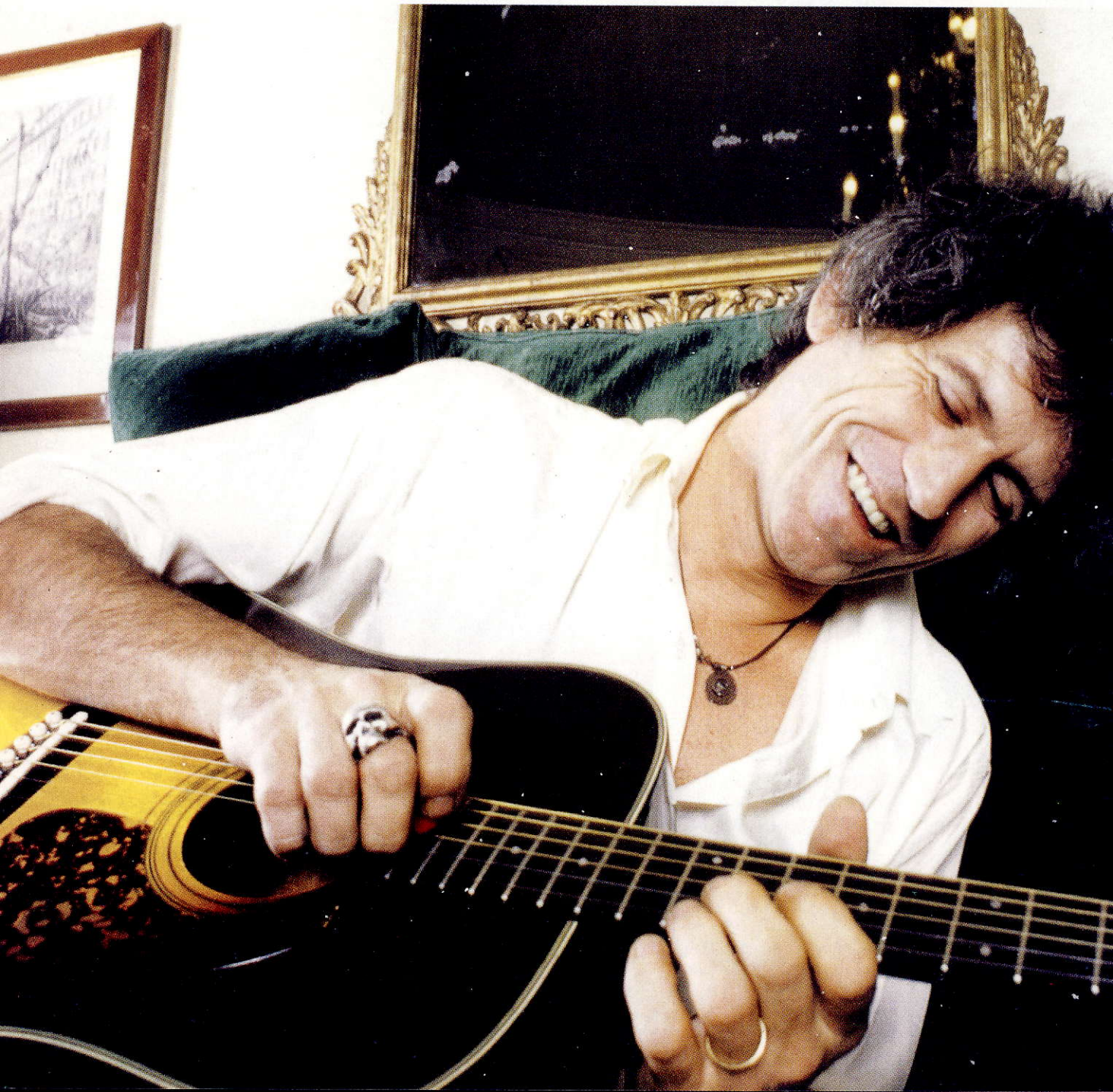
The germ of the idea came from rehearsals for the tour. We were rehearsing for six weeks, doing five or six, maybe 10 to 12 hours a day in there, listening to playbacks every night, just to check the sound and do the usual night watchman bit. They started to sound good. The tracks had a certain different feel—the guys think they're not recording, they're working and playing and having fun. So that's where the germ of the idea started.

GW What made the spirit of the playing so different?

RICHARDS Size. Most of these tracks, all but three, were done in a little room, with the whole band thrown in, no overdubs. You're live, but there's no audience. You catch the guys unaware—that's the kind of feel on it. You get a chance to play some of the old songs again, maybe put in a few licks you wish you'd put in the first time. [*laughs*]

GW Like what?

RICHARDS The original of "Street Fighting Man" is all acoustic. Ever since then, for nearly 30 years, we've been playing it electric onstage. To be able to play that acousti-



LUCIANO VITI / RETNA UK

cally again, in its original instrumentations, that's a turn-on. I never thought I'd do that again.

GW What other new licks are on *Stripped*?

RICHARDS On "Wild Horses," I managed to work in a few things I wished I'd put on the original, some harmonies and stuff.

GW What surprised you about this album?

RICHARDS I think we all surprised ourselves; this is an interesting little line-up, isn't it? "I'm Free"—I had forgotten about that for nearly 30 years. It just came out of a dinner break. I wasn't hungry, nor was Chuck Leavell, and we started playing "Tracks of My Tears" for fun. Everybody was eating while we were playing and having fun. I looked at Chuck and said, "Do we have one that goes like this, like Sixties soul? We must have one somewhere." Suddenly, from nowhere, it came to me: "I'm Free."

"The Spider and the Fly," too. I never expected to record that one again.

GW What were the criteria for whether or not a particular song would work?

RICHARDS In general I ask, "Will it work technically? Can you put a band of this size, with four horns, keyboards, two singers, two guitars, drums and bass all in one small room and get the sound we want?" Once I'm satisfied that's the case, I'm happy and we go for it.

GW What is it about a rehearsal room that brings something special out of you?

RICHARDS Everything. That's where the bonding of a band actually occurs. It has to be done there. It's not just learning the songs or deciding which ones to play. It's a process of welding together. It all happens there; you can't just go and start the first show. The rehearsals are just the guys going, "Hey, here's what you want to do." There's no pressure on you; they're just brainstorming sessions, "Try this, try that." It's just laid-back, relaxed playing. And that's where you develop into an onstage unit. It all happens in the back room.

GW Were the places where you recorded *Stripped* different from the first rehearsals in Toronto?

RICHARDS There was very little difference at all. And that's what we were basically going for, that feeling we got in the school in Toronto, just kicking songs around. Like I said, that was the inspiration for the album. Once you're in those rooms with the band, you wouldn't know if it's Tokyo or Lisbon or wherever.

GW These sessions were filmed for future use. Does that affect the music making at all?

RICHARDS We only let the cameras in for half an hour at a time. We'd let them in for a bit and then we'd get down to business. Actually, when you're on the road and the band is so hot, you're fairly used to cameras and peripheral people being around. It doesn't really affect what you're doing. They're just things that come up to you, one-eyed guys with great lenses.

GW Did you refer much to the original versions of the songs?

RICHARDS Just to pick up the lyrics or the odd chord change. We didn't study them or anything like that. It's 25, 30 years later; you're not going to play it the same. You wouldn't want to. But you wouldn't want to do it that differently, either. You want to remember, What was I going for when I did it the first time? and then do it a little more grown up this time.

GW The Rolling Stones, grown up?

RICHARDS Yeah. [*laughs*] The beat's more relaxed, more fluid, I think. I don't think anything's lost its edge. There's just a little more depth to everything. Mick is singing better than ever, the best I've heard him. And I've got to say, Darryl Jones—hey, this guy makes a big difference, too. You change the bass player; you're changing your engine room. But the way Darryl and Charlie hooked up from the beginning was a joy to me. That was a potential make-me-nervous situation; finding the right guy was all-important. Mr. Jones sounds better than I'd hoped for.

GW Is he a full-fledged Stone now?

RICHARDS Hey, *I'm* still on my way! I'm trying to get there, too. [*laughs*] But, no, I don't want to go through changing the engine room again. I've got a brand new engine, which I expect to run for many, many miles with little service—to put it in Motown terms.

GW So there's no truth to reports that this was the last Stones tour, that you're going to retire?

RICHARDS No. I can't even spell the word. It's just the latest tour.

GW The *Stripped* version of "Love in Vain," not surprisingly, brought to mind the version on *Let It Bleed*. How did you develop that arrangement, which differs tremendously from the Robert Johnson original?

RICHARDS Sometimes I wonder about that myself. I don't know! [*laughs*] We only knew the Robert Johnson version. At the time we were kicking it around, I was into country music—old white country music, Twenties and Thirties

KEITH IN THE MID EIGHTIES

PRIME CUTS

KEITH ON "CAN'T YOU HEAR ME KNOCKING"

ON THAT SONG, my fingers just landed in the right place and I discovered a few things about that [*five-string, open G*] tuning that I'd never been aware of. I think I realized that even as I was cutting the track. And then that jam at the end—we didn't even know they were still taping. We thought we'd finished. We were just rambling and they kept the tape rolling. It was only when we heard the playback we realized: "Oh they kept it going. Okay, fade it out there...no wait, a little bit more, a bit more..." Basically, we realized we had two bits of music: there's the song and there's the jam.

stuff, and white gospel. Somewhere I crossed over into this more classical mode.

Sometimes things just happen. We were sitting in the studio, saying, "Let's do 'Love in Vain' by Robert Johnson." Then I'm trying to figure out some nuances and chords, and I start to play it in a totally different fashion. Everybody joins in and goes, "Yeah," and suddenly you've got your own stamp on it. I certainly wasn't going to be able to top Robert Johnson's guitar playing.

GW Did you ever try to figure out what he was doing?

RICHARDS Some of it. Some say I'm pretty good at it; I say I'm only a third of the way there. He's like Bach on that thing; he has different licks, very different sounds and different systems of picking, different tunings. What a hell of a guy. I wonder if he would have told you his secrets?

GW The Stones have always done a lot of covers, but did "Love in Vain" feel a little more "holy" than others?

RICHARDS All music is holy, you know? You can have profane versions of things. So as far as I'm concerned, you can either have a good version of a piece of music or a bad one. It doesn't matter if you change or expand it. I think if Johnson heard ours, he wouldn't turn his nose up. I think he'd prefer to be alive, too. [*laughs*]

GW You played "Love in Vain" on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, too. That was pretty ballsy.

RICHARDS I don't know. You kind of feel like it's the *Ed Sullivan Show*, and the Stones have always loved a challenge. We didn't want to go on Ed Sullivan and be one of the other acts, the performing elephant or the two men with the tambourines, the magician or whatever. It was, "Let's use Ed like he's using us, to try out some different things, and see how it goes."

GW Much of *Stripped* has a distinctly country flavor. Who are your primary influences in that genre?

RICHARDS [*Country rock pioneer*] Gram Parsons and many other guys you can pull out. Ian Stewart, too. They still join the band when we're playing, in one form or another. You carry little shades of them with you. I've listened to it since I was growing up, along with jazz and classical. It was the BBC and that was it. My mother was very musically inclined. I grew up listening to really good music, a lot of it too sophisticated for a kid, like Sarah Vaughan,

KEITH RECORDING THE *AFTERMATH* ALBUM IN HOLLYWOOD, DECEMBER 1965

GERED MENKOWITZ

Billy Eckstine, Ella Fitzgerald and Count Basie. At the same time, we had George Jones, Ernest Tubb, Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams; I grew up with them as well.

So to me, country music comes quite naturally—after all, those melodies basically originate in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The playing is not very difficult; it's just that the studs and rhinestones are hard to find in England! [*laughs*]

GW Do you examine your own influences after you've finished writing or recording a song?

RICHARDS I think about that a lot. I guess if you're a musician and you write songs now and again, there's a feeling that whatever you listen to, in a way, seeps in. But you're not necessarily conscious of it. If you listen to a lot of Mozart, maybe a year or two later some kind of melody that you learned from listening to that will come out. Suddenly you realize that if you hadn't listened to some of these people, then you wouldn't be writing what you are at that moment. So once again you tip your hat to the masters.

GW Quite a few younger rockers should be tipping their hats to you.

RICHARDS That's what I call flattering—or maybe it's just longevity. We have made some good records. It's nice to know that there are a lot of kids out there for us. I see them on the road all the time, the budding juvenile guitar players down in front. They're looking at my fingers, and I'm thinking, All right, boys, yes. If you can figure it out, good luck. But I don't know if you can..."

GW Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone" always seemed like a natural for you guys. How did you finally get the nerve to put it on tape?

RICHARDS We got over the built-in reticence. If he had written "Like a Beatle," we probably would have done it straightaway. We've been playing that song ever since Bob brought it out; it was like a dressing room favorite, a tuning room favorite. We know it really well. It was just a matter of screwing up the courage, really, to get over the feeling like we were riding on its back..

GW "Little Baby," which closes the album, really dips into the deep recesses of the Willie Dixon songbook.

KEITH & RON PERFORMING WITH BOB DYLAN (CENTER) AT LIVE AID, JULY 13, 1985

RICHARDS Mick just popped up with that. We went into it in, like, one take. Then we realized it's Willie Dixon; Howlin' Wolf did it originally, but it's a Willie Dixon song. We realized it was kind of like a variation on "My Babe," which Willie also wrote, with breakdowns in it. It just felt right.

Also, we've never done it before, and we wanted to put a couple of tracks on there that were not re-recordings, like "Rolling Stone." We just put it on tape and, suddenly, at the last moment, it cropped up as the last track when we found out we needed two more tracks.

GW *Stripped* has a nice take on "Slippin' Away."

RICHARDS The band kind of guided me—let's not say coerced me—into doing it. In rehearsals, we would say that we did every song we've ever recorded that we could remember, and that was one of them. We realized, "Wow, that song kind of slipped away." It just kind of tailed off at the end of *Steel Wheels*. We realized what potential it still had, and the band and especially the horns guys said, "You've got to do that!" So in a way, I agreed to do it at gunpoint. But when I got into it, I really liked singing that song. It's got some depth.

GW And "Angie" finally made it onto a live disc.

RICHARDS We realized that, too. It always kind of fell through the net. I think it was another of those that we felt was too obvious.

GW So what is the state of the Stones these days?

RICHARDS It's never been better, really. That's the medical bulletin today. I've never seen Charlie Watts so happy on the road; he's a happy guy, normally, but the road can get to anybody. He's brought his old lady with him more, and I think he's enjoying playing with Darryl, playing with the Stones. I think part of that comes from taking his own thing around, the jazz band. He took it around the world, and he learned a lot, found a lot more enjoyment and possibilities of playing.

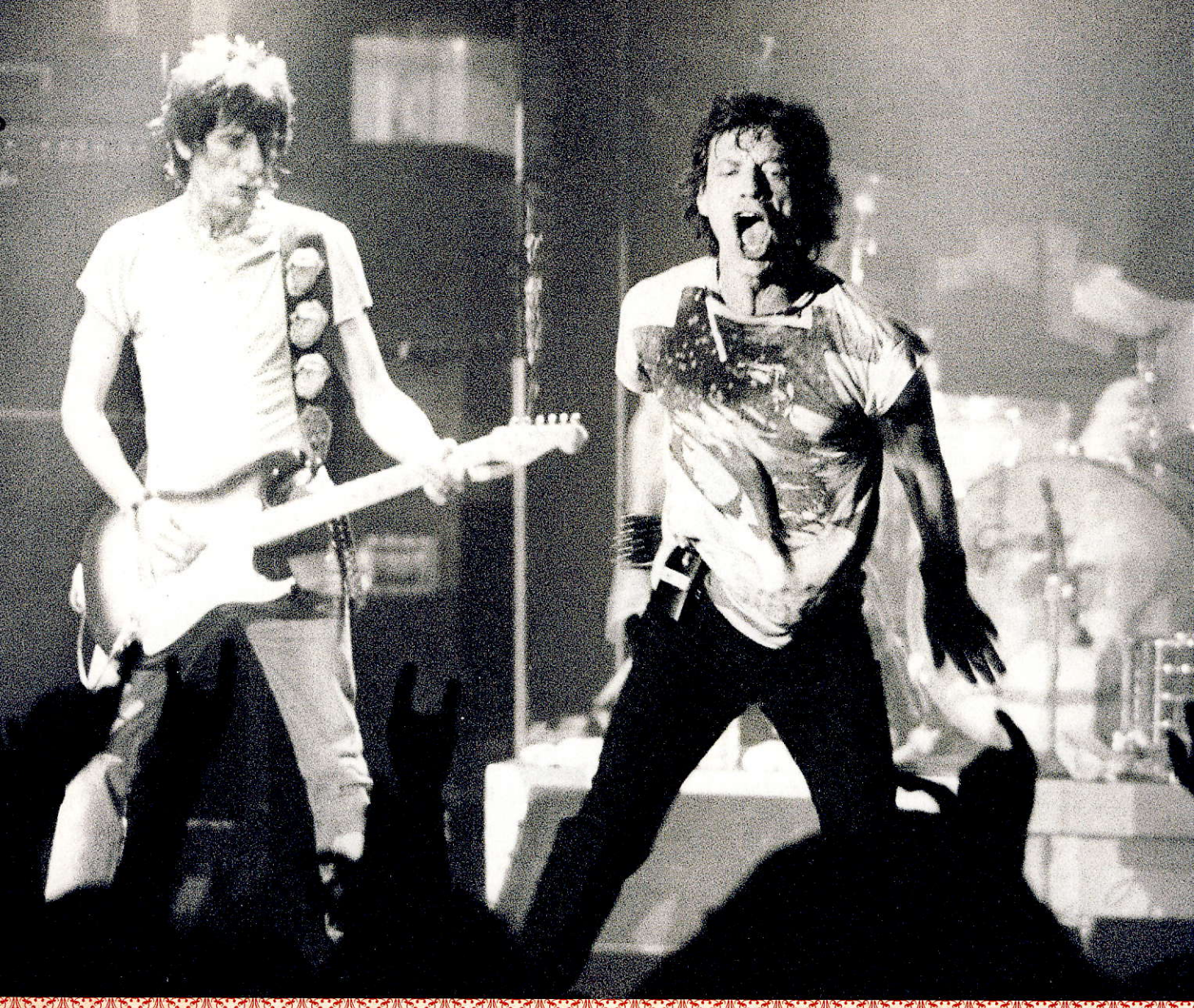
> *"Mick is* **EXTREMELY CHARMING** *these days,* **EVEN TO ME**. *We're getting along great."*

And Mick is extremely charming these days, even to me. We're getting along great. The band just feels good about itself, which is why we're going back on the road.

GW Is it possible that you guys just appreciate what the Stones are more than you have in the past?

RICHARDSThe Stones always have to look for the Stones in themselves. We're still going. People's idea of the Stones changes from when they first heard them; there's myriad ideas and concepts of what the Stones are to listeners, just depending on how long they've known us. We're constantly going forward as well, always looking for the Stones in the same way. Sometimes you screw it up, but most times it gives us some encouragement that we'll find it again. It's very much a focused band, a lot of direction and energy. You can't ask for more than that.

URBANIMAGE.TV / ADRIAN BOOT



HEART *of* Stone

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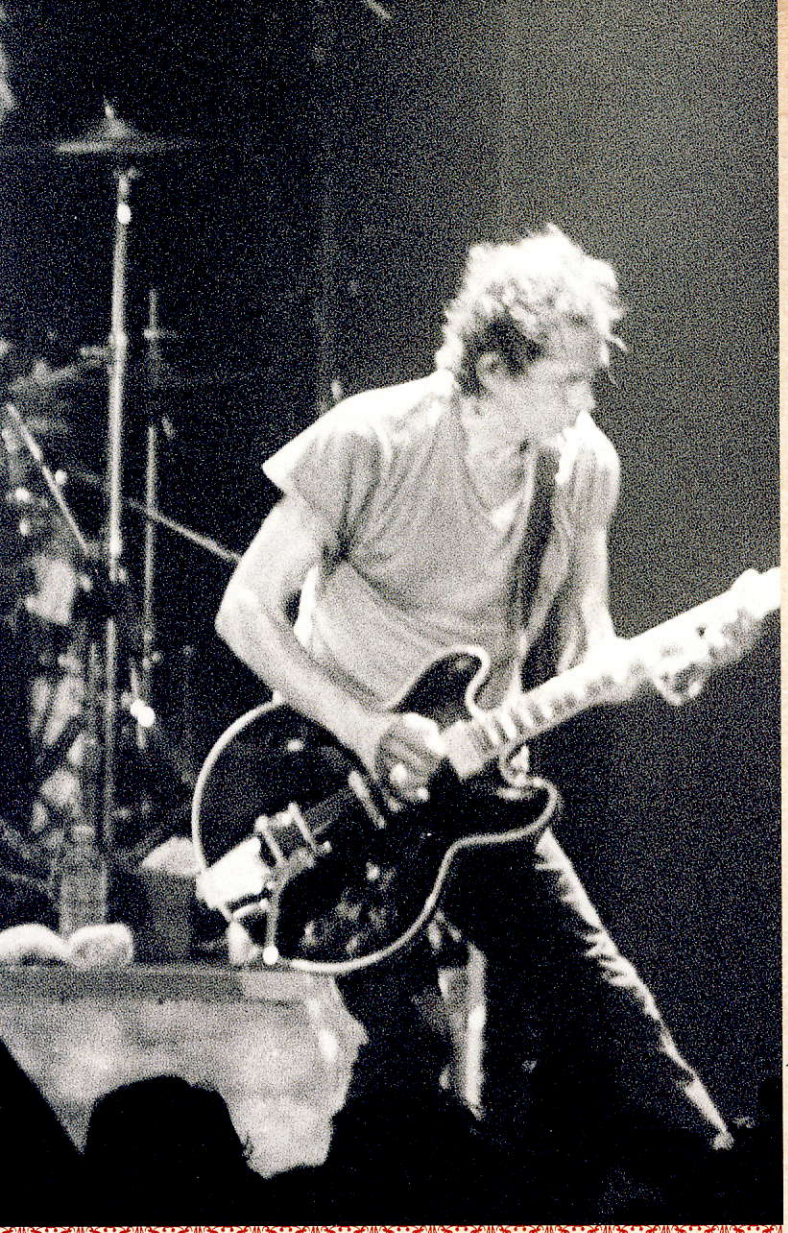


ON TOUR IN 2002

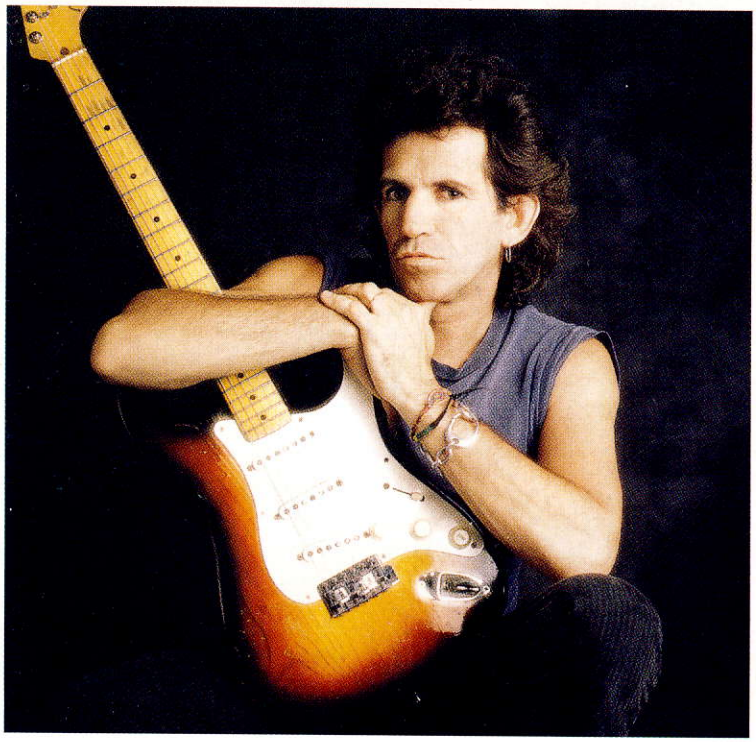
HE'S THE EMBODIMENT OF THE ROCK AND ROLL SPIRIT AND ONE OF THE MAJOR CULTURAL FIGURES OF THE 20TH CENTURY. IN AN EXCLUSIVE AND UNPRECEDENTED *GUITAR WORLD* INTERVIEW, KEITH RICHARDS LOOKS BACK AT 40 YEARS OF REVOLUTIONARY MUSIC MAKING AND LETS IT LOOSE.

BY ALAN DI PERNA

REPRINTED FROM *GUITAR WORLD*, OCTOBER 2002

Forty years. When half of all marriages bite the dust before the thank-you cards have been mailed, the thought of a rock and roll band, of all things, celebrating its ruby anniversary feels both incredible and incredibly perverse. Whatever happened to "Hope I die before I get old" or "It's better to burn out than fade away"? True, those slogans didn't spring from the lips of either Mick Jagger or Keith Richards, but wasn't it Jagger who once famously said, "I'd rather die than sing 'Satisfaction' when I'm 40"?

Forgotten pronouncements aside, in 2002 the Rolling Stones did indeed hit the Big 4-0, and despite claims of "not making too big a deal of this," they »



commemorated their astonishing longevity (and the fact that Mick and Keith still hadn't strangled each other) with one hell of a party—by releasing 40 Licks, their most extensive greatest-hits collection yet, and embarking on one of their patented, exhaustive world tours. Sure beats sitting home and waiting on those Social Security checks.

In the following interview with Alan di Perna, Keith Richards recalls the halcyon days of Sixties pop stardom, the sacking of guitarist Brian Jones, the making of a "blues opera," and Butter Queens (let your imagination run wild). Plus, he reveals what he *really* thinks of Mick Jagger's last solo record.

GUITAR WORLD *You've never been one to live by the clock or calendar.*

KEITH RICHARDS *No...not exactly.*

GW So does a milestone like the 40th anniversary of the Rolling Stones mean all that much to you?

RICHARDS When a band has stayed together this long, there is a certain secret professional pride in that. But I don't think any of us would go around saying that—certainly not to each other, or even to ourselves. I guess there's just a thing in our society about decades—numbers that end in zero. I don't know why.

GW What prompted your decision to include some brand-new Rolling Stones tracks on *40 Licks*?

RICHARDS The only difference between us and the Beatles is that we're still going. So, unlike the Beatles' greatest-hits set [*1*] we felt we had to put on two or three new tracks in a "to be continued" kind of spirit. I didn't want it to be all just nostalgia. Also, I didn't want to turn up for rehearsals for this tour without having played together with everybody since the end of the last tour. That would have been a little too much—straight into "Start Me Up" all over again. I love to play those songs. But I already *know* how to play them. I don't need to rehearse them. So I wanted to get the band to play together on some new stuff. Playing new music really tightens the band up. Getting everybody together for a month in Paris, I didn't mind if we came out with no tracks at all. But as it turned out, we came out with 30 tracks! On our very first night in Paris we got three tracks down. Everybody went, "Yeah." Out of the 30 songs we recorded, we mixed four or five. We're still dickering between them right now, figuring out what will go on the album. But my strategy worked, I think. Everyone's got their chops together and they're really looking forward to this tour. It's not just a regurgitation. It's still a working band.

GW So did it pay off for the Stones to abandon blues purism and start playing the pop game circa 1963?

RICHARDS We did that because we wanted to make records. To get into a recording studio was almost like getting into heaven. Even harder, maybe. So the inducement of a recording contract made us willing to play that game. We all agonized about it, of course. "Should we put these jackets on and go on TV?" But once we did, there was no turning back. Within a week or so we were suddenly London's answer to the Beatles. We were in the pop game. At the same time, we learned the music business. And we realized we'd stepped into a sea of piranhas. The question was, did you spend your energy on the music or dealing with these piranhas? Well, you've got to learn to do both at the same time. Once you're in, you really can't get out. There you are with *Melody Maker* and *16* magazine. And you're going, "What the hell am I doing talking to this chick about what's my favorite color?" And they say, "Oh, we're going to do a group photo. You can't sit on the bed together." Well, where else should we sit? There's no chairs in the room.

LEFT: KEITH IN THE EIGHTIES. RIGHT: MICK AND KEITH IN DALY CITY, CA IN 1975

GW Why couldn't you sit on the bed together? Would that have had homosexual connotations back then?

RICHARDS Yeah. Just the fact that it's the bed and two guys are on it. If it was a chick, it would be even worse, I guess. There were all these weird rules you had to learn. But we found it pretty easy, I must say, to play the pop game. Especially when the chicks started throwing themselves at us. That was an added inducement.

GW Bill Wyman, in his autobiography, *Stone Alone* (1990), said that the groupie scene started quite early for the Stones—around the time of your first or second single in England. Is that the way you remember it?

RICHARDS Well, yeah. Wyman was quite accurate in that. But the fact is anytime musicians are passing through a town and they're up onstage... It didn't start with the Stones, believe me. Some of the chicks Bill had had been through half the rock and rollers of the previous generation before they got to him. It may have started for *him* then. But from time immemorial, that's why guys become musicians and go on the road. "Hello darlin', how ya doin'?" Then, "Thank you very much. I'm outta here. See ya next time around." I'm sure there's been groupies for 2,000 years at least, if not longer.

GW Can you recall when it first turned kind of "professional"? More than just the local schoolgirls backstage in drab little coats?

RICHARDS Oh yeah, that was '66 or '67. The Butter Queens and the Plaster Casters. These little teams of chicks that would set themselves up as professional groupies.

GW The Butter Queens?

RICHARDS The Butter Queens, yeah. They did loads of wonderful things with butter, apparently. I used to see them

LEFT: LYNN GOLDSMITH/CORBIS; RIGHT: MICHAEL DOBO/MICHAEL OCHS

PRIME CUTS

KEITH ON "STREET FIGHTING MAN"

WHEN WE WENT in the studio, we just couldn't reproduce the sound of the original demo I did on cassette. So we played the cassette through an extension speaker and I played along with it—we just shoved a microphone into an acoustic and overdubbed it onto the track from the cassette. Then we put it on a four-track, played it back, and at the same time the guitar was going on, I had [*session keyboard great*] Nicky Hopkins playing a bit of piano and Charlie [*Watts, drums*] just shuffling in the background. Then we put drums on it and added another guitar while he was doing that, and we just kept layering it.

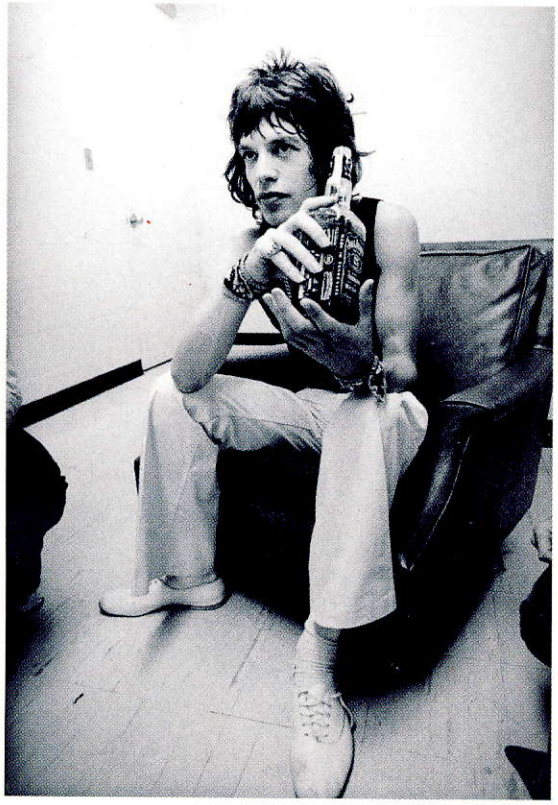
At that time I was into really compressing the acoustic guitar by running it through the early Phillips and Norelco cassette recorders and really overloading them. They came with a little plastic mic and I'd slam that right down into the acoustic guitar. I did that on "Jumping Jack Flash," too. With all of those songs, I wanted the drive and dryness of an acoustic guitar, but I still wanted to distort it.

On "Street Fighting Man," there's one six-string and one five-string acoustic. They're both in open tunings, but then there's a lot of capo work. There are lots of layers of guitars on "Street Fighting Man," so it's difficult to say what you're hearing on there.

around all the time, but they never buttered me up. I used to avoid them like the plague. Anything that smacked of professionalism. "We've got a plaster cast of Robert Plant's cock. Would you like to add yours to the collection?" No, I never wanted to be part of anybody's collection. But mind you, there were some great individual operators out there.

GW I remember Steven Tyler telling me that as he got deeper into drugs he'd be much more interested in copping some good dope on the road than availing himself of any of the female companionship on offer.

RICHARDS Yeah, that was basically part of my thing as well. But there are always wonderful ladies out there. At the end of the day, that's the other payback. Except very early on, when Ian Stewart used to decide where we would stay. Stu loved to play golf and he'd book these hotels miles from the venue, way out of the way, so as to be near a golf course. The rest of us had trouble persuading girls to ride all the way out there in the van. Stu probably got us out of a lot of trouble, in one way or another. But we were grateful once the organization got too big for Stu to pick out the hotels anymore.



MICK DURING THE 1972 TOUR

GW In stage photos and TV stills from that early period, you're often seen with an Epiphone semi-acoustic. Was that just a stage guitar or did it make it onto the early singles?

RICHARDS I'm pretty sure that Epiphone was on "It's All Over Now" and probably some of the earlier ones from England. I used it for a good while, mainly because I had it. It was a nice guitar, because Epiphone was a branch of Gibson at the time. It was a great guitar for studio work and in clubs. But once we got into theaters and bigger gigs, I found the feedback and howl of those Epiphones was uncontrollable and I started to go for solidbodies, like the Les Paul. [*Richards has played numerous Les Paul models over the years, but is perhaps most closely associated with Black Beauties, i.e. three-pickup, black Les Paul Customs, particularly a late-Fifties Custom decorated with a moon-and-star motif painted by the guitarist himself—Ed.*]

GW Can we make a case for the Stones' pioneering riff-oriented rock with songs like "Satisfaction" and "The Last Time"? Those were some of the earliest songs where the guitar riff *is* the statement—the main hook.

RICHARDS I don't know. Sometimes it's easy for me to get carried away by other people's theories of what we've done.

GW The Stones did a lot of recording at RCA in the early days, including hits like "Satisfaction," "The Last Time" and "Mother's Little Helper." What did you like about the place?

RICHARDS It was a lovely big room, which meant you could work for hours and hours without getting tired. Good equipment. Great address [*on Hollywood Boulevard*]. Also Dave Hassinger was there, who was a great engineer. In those days, for two or three years, we were basically working 350 days a year. You'd have 10 days off the tour to go to L.A. and record. RCA was the first room we recorded in in L.A. So we knew that when we got there we weren't in for strange surroundings. There was no time to check out a bunch of studios in those days. You'd just set up and go. That first year we came to America we discovered RCA and Chess Recording: 2120. [*South Michigan Avenue, in Chicago. Immortalized in the title of a Stones instrumental from that era, the Chess studio had been the site of historic recordings by Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf and other of the Stones' blues heroes—Ed.*] After what we'd been used to in England we said, "Wow, these are what we call studios."

GW Listening carefully to "Get Off My Cloud," you realize how beautifully the rhythm guitar works with the piano. The piano is subtle, but it's important.

RICHARDS I think that was just a matter of saying, "Stu, this sounds a bit thin. Can you just play a little piano under it?" 'Cause for me, and for Charlie, I think—I don't know if Mick would agree—this is basically Stu's band. We're working for a dead man. When we recently had that week of recording in Paris, a couple of times we'd be playing and Charlie would look up at me: "Stu?" "Yeah, he's here."

But yeah, that was just one of those things you could do in those days—shadow a guitar with a piano. As long as you didn't make it obvious, it would add some different air to a track. 'Cause that was all four-track time. Basically, you had to get it in the room. There was no, "What if we overdubbed added violins?" The only choice was to decide whether you'd got it or if you had to do another take. All that changed very quickly, of course, going to eight, 16, then 24 tracks in a matter of just a couple of years. Everyone was reveling in all these tracks, and at the same time their records weren't sounding too good and they were taking longer to make.

GW What did you use to create that curiously aquatic guitar sound for the melodic riffs on "Mother's Little Helper"?

RICHARDS That's a 12-string with a slide on it. It's played slightly Oriental-ish. The track just needed something to make it twang. Otherwise, the song was quite vaudeville in a way. I wanted to add some nice bite to it. And it was just one of those things where someone walked in and, "Look, it's an electric 12-string." It was some gashed-up job. No name on it. God knows where it came from. Or where it went. But I put it together with a bottleneck. Then we had a riff that tied the whole thing together. And I think we overdubbed onto that. Because I played an acoustic guitar as well.

GW The Stones had an endorsement deal with Vox around this time. Were those the amps you were using in the studio?

RICHARDS I have no doubt they were. The AC30's a damn good amp. But you don't want two guitar players in a band playing out of the same make and model amplifier. It's too much the same sound. So as soon as I got to America I got myself a Fender amp. There was something about that little herringbone box. I fell in love with Fender amps real quick. But Ronnie Wood still uses AC30s today in the Stones. And Brian used them. Basically it was a Brian deal with Vox.

JIM MARSHALL (THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE)

KEITH BACKSTAGE DURING THE 1972 TOUR

'Cause they made him his teardrop guitar. [*Jones played a rare two-pickup version of the Vox Mk VI—Ed.*] But the AC30 was probably the best all-around British amp at the time, without a doubt. Of all time.

GW In addition to the teardrop guitar, Brian was often seen playing a Gibson Firebird. Did he use that in the studio or just for concerts and TV appearances?

RICHARDS He definitely used it in the studio. I can see him right now with that Firebird. The thing with Brian was he would hop from instrument to instrument. He was always searching for another sound. As a musician he was very versatile. He'd be just as happy playing the marimbas or bells as he was guitar. Sometimes I'd be saying, "Oh, make up your mind what sound you're going to have, Brian." 'Cause he'd keep changing guitars. So it's difficult to say which guitar he was using on which track. He wasn't one of those guys who said, "Right, here's my ax." Brian had so many. Sometimes he'd walk in with a guitar someone had given him and he'd insist on using it, even if it wasn't the right one for the job.

GW Did you ever fool around with sitars or other instruments Brian left lying around?

RICHARDS No. Something about the strings on a sitar—they were too thin. Brian got into playing it, and I did find the instrument interesting—the idea of the sympathetic strings underneath that resonate to one of the strings on top. So it was good for drones. Arrangement-wise, I used it as I thought it should be used—as an interesting extra sound on one or two things, like "Paint It Black."

GW Who thought up the coda to "Mother's Little Helper," where it modulates to the relative major and ends with that "Hey!"?

RICHARDS I think I had that song pretty well set up, arrangement-wise, when I brought it into the studio. I had the main riff. It might have been Bill Wyman who came up with that ending. He was also instrumental on "Paint It Black," adding organ pedals to the bottom end. "Mother's Little Helper" and "Paint It Black" are these semi-gypsy melodies. I don't know where they came from. Must be in the blood somewhere.

> *"Mick Jagger's* **REALLY GOOD** *when he's with the Rolling Stones. But when he ain't, I don't think anybody gives* **A F**KIN' TOSS.**"

GW Speaking things being in the blood, what was it like coming from a middle class background?

RICHARDS Actually I'm not; Mick could be classified as middle class. I come from the projects.

GW Okay, what was it like to come from that kind of background and suddenly be part of the Swinging London scene circa '66 or '67—rubbing shoulders with aristocrats and people from the fine arts world?

RICHARDS Well, it happens very easily when *they* want to know you. [*laughs*] England was really shrugging off WWII, at last, by the end of the Fifties and early Sixties. Everybody

KEITH ONSTAGE IN 1972

was quite willing to change the playing field. I certainly had no aspirations in that particular area at all—society or anything like that. But I have a feeling that there was a certain percentage of the higher strata of English society who felt they were being left behind. And suddenly they wanted to go slumming. Or at least their kids did. So it was more a matter of them wanting to get into our society, rather than us wanting to get into theirs.

When you're on the road as a musician, you learn to take people as they come. It doesn't matter where they come from or anything like that. There's always a barrage of people, and you're here today and gone tomorrow—always traveling. So you learn to size up people really quickly. Without even realizing it, you fall into the knack of doing that. If you don't, you get into trouble. The rest of it doesn't matter. You don't have time to go into people's backgrounds. And then two weeks later someone says, "Oh, when you spent the night with Princess So and So..." And I'd say, "Who? What do you mean?" "You know, that chick Lucy." Oh, is she a princess? She didn't act like it."

GW Do early songs like "Play with Fire," or catty songs on *Between the Buttons* like "Complicated" and "Miss Amanda Jones," come out of that kind of experience—observations of debutante life?

RICHARDS Yeah, they probably do. They all come out of our first year of fame and being on the road—expanding our horizons and at the same time seriously getting down to work writing songs. Inevitably you draw on your own experiences. It's all a bit of a lark, really.

GW In retrospect, do you think *Between the Buttons* is an underrated album?

RICHARDS *Between the Buttons* was the first record we made when we hadn't been on the road and weren't shit-hot from playing gigs every night. Plus, everyone was stoned out of their brains. And it was the Summer of Love over there in America as well. *Between the Buttons* was the first time we took a breath and distanced ourselves a little from the madness of touring and all. So in a way, to us it felt like a bit of a new beginning. But not everybody was in great shape. Brian was starting to be wonky at the time.

GW When did you first have an inkling that Brian wasn't going to make it?

RICHARDS I guess toward the end of '66 I started to get this impression that Brian thought it was his band. He started to get ideas. Given the pressure of work at the time, nobody had time to think about it. They just said, "Oh Brian, piss off." Which I think he took more personally than was probably meant. Alienation started to set in. That grew more intense in the period of *Between the Buttons*, when we had this time off and everybody suddenly wasn't on everybody else's back. At the time, with Brian, we all figured, "It's just pressure. He'll get over it." But instead he kind of separated himself from the band in a way. It was only a slight nuance at the time. We just carried on and said, "Oh, big deal." But it grew more intense over the next couple of years.

And then of course the thing with Anita happened—then it became personal. [*There were violent scenes between Jones and his then-girlfriend, Italian-German actress-model Anita Pallenberg, during a road trip to Morocco that the couple made with Richards in March 1967. Pallenberg transferred her affections to Richards. She would later bear Richards' sons Marlon and Tara Jo Jo Gunne and daughter Dandelion—Ed.*] I suppose that was the irrevocable break. But shit happens, you know? Yeah, I stole his girlfriend. But only because he was trying to beat her up. I tried to stop it because he was coming off worse. Brian had two broken ribs and a broken wrist, and Anita just had a black eye. Anita and I fell in with each other. By then Brian had become pretty unbearable to live with. Which is probably why I ended up with Anita.

GW Many people say that your place in Cheyne Walk in London, which you shared with Anita for a while, was haunted. Do you think it was?

RICHARDS No. It's an old house and it creaks a lot. Old houses do that. A lot of people were really stoned there. No doubt they had heightened imaginations. But quite honestly, in the time I lived there, that never occurred to me. If it was haunted, it was haunted by the cops!

GW Have you ever seen a ghost?

RICHARDS Only my own, pal.

GW For all the Stones' problems in the late Sixties, with Brian and harassment by the police over drugs, that period is also one of the band's most brilliant. "Jumping Jack Flash," for instance. Do you remember which guitar you used for that?

RICHARDS A Gibson Hummingbird [*acoustic*] tuned to open D, six string [*low to high: D, A, D, F♯, A, D*]. Open D or open E [*low to high: E, B, E, G♯, B, E*], which is the same thing—same intervals—but it would be slackened down some for D. Then there was a capo on it, to get that really tight sound. [*As the recording sounds in the key of E flat, Keith's guitar was most likely tuned to open D, with a capo placed at the first fret.—Ed.*] And there was another guitar over the top of that, but tuned to Nashville tuning [*In Nashville tuning—what Richards calls "high-strung tuning"—the guitar is tuned E A D G B E , but the bottom four strings are replaced with thinner strings tuned one octave higher than normal, such as the extra strings on a 12-string guitar—Ed.*] I learned that from somebody in [*country star*] George Jones' band in San Antonio in '63. We happened to be playing the World Teen Fair, and San Antonio in 1963 was just a cow town. George Jones and his band practically had tumbleweeds around their Stetsons and boots. One of his band had a high-strung guitar. We had a couple of hours to kick around. So he showed me how to do it, with the different strings, to get that high ring. I was picking up tips.

> *"Once you're on* **SMACK**, *it's really difficult to kick it. But it ain't impossible. It's not like getting your leg* **BLOWN OFF**."

GW Was the high-strung guitar on "Jumping Jack Flash" an electric?

RICHARDS No. That was an acoustic, too. Both acoustics were put through a Phillips cassette recorder. Just jam the mic right in the guitar and play it back through and extension speaker. [*In effect, Richards used an inexpensive portable cassette recorder, then a relatively new invention, as a crude microphone preamp, also employing the inexpensive plastic mic generally furnished with such units. At this time, portable cassette recorders did not have any built-in limiting circuitry to enable them to produce quite a raunchy distortion sound—Ed.*]

GW People tend to associate the cassette recorder trick more with "Street Fighting Man."

RICHARDS I used it there too. The acoustic guitar is all about what comes off the fingers. That's what's important. Once you put a microphone in front of any guitar, it's automatically electric. Even if Segovia's playing. For me, there was no way of miking up an acoustic guitar that would do. What I

PRIME CUTS

KEITH ON "PAINT IT BLACK"

Brian [*Jones, Rolling Stones founder and Richards' original coguitarist*] got into the sitar and used it on a few things, like "Paint It Black." I found it an interesting instrument, the idea of the sympathetic strings underneath that resonate to the strings on top. But as far as actually playing it—leave that to the Indians. There's just something about the strings; they were too thin. But Brian loved to dodge around and play dulcimers, mandolins...things like that. [*Former bassist*] Bill Wyman was also instrumental to the sound of "Paint It Black" by adding the organ pedals. That song is another one of those semi-gypsy melodies we used to come up with back then. I don't know there they come from. Must be in the blood.

NEIL ZLOZOWER

KEITH IN WESTON, CT, ON JULY 28, 1993

was after with all of those—"Street Fighting Man," "Jumping Jack Flash"—was to get the drive and dryness of an acoustic guitar but still distort it. They were all attempts at that.

GW Did you use the same open tunings for "Jumping Jack Flash" and "Street Fighting Man"?

RICHARDS No, on "Street Fighting Man" there's one six-string open and one five-string open. They're both open tunings, but then there's a lot of capo work. There are lots of layers of guitars on "Street Fighting Man." There's lots of guitars you don't even hear. They're just shadowing. So it's difficult to say what you're hearing on there. 'Cause I tried eight different guitars. And which ones were used in the final version, I couldn't say.

GW According to Wyman's *Stone Alone*, once again, "Street Fighting Man" started on cassette, was transferred to four-track, and then from there it went to eight-track.

RICHARDS That seems right. 'Cause we just couldn't reproduce the sound of the original demo I did on cassette. So we played the cassette through an extension speaker so I could play on top of that—shove a microphone into an acoustic and overdub to that. Then we put it on a four-track, played it back, and at the same time the guitar was going on, I had [*session keyboard great*] Nicky Hopkins playing a bit of piano, and Charlie just shuffling in the background. Then we put drums on it and added another guitar while he was doing that. And we just kept layering it.

GW People aren't always aware of your bass-playing contributions to the Stones. But you played bass on "Jumping Jack Flash"...

RICHARDS Yeah. "Sympathy for the Devil." "Live with Me." I do like playing bass. Still do.

GW Is it that Bill just wouldn't be around when it came time to record the bass?

RICHARDS Usually. Or sometimes I'd say, "Bill, it goes like this." And he'd say, "Why show me? You got it down. Let's make this simple. You do it." There were never any hassles in that respect. Just like there are some songs where Bill plays keyboards.

GW You're seen with a Telecaster, if memory serves, in Jean-Luc Godard's film *One Plus One*, which documents the sessions for "Sympathy for the Devil." Was that around the time the Tele first arrived in your life?

RICHARDS That's around when I started, yeah. Around '67 or '68. That's when I really started to get to grips with the Fenders. Before that I was using Gibsons, and any other guitars that came my way, through Fender amps. Then I realized

PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES

> *"The* **BUTTER QUEENS**, *yeah. They did loads of* **WONDERFUL THINGS** *with butter, apparently. I used to avoid them like the plague."*

that Leo Fender's genius was matching the amp to the guitar. If you really want a nice sound out of a Fender amp, you have to use a Fender guitar. It's a beautiful electronic marriage. It seems obvious, but it took me a while to figure that out. A matching pair. Oh dear me, well done, Leo. That's what really impressed me. And also the Telecaster, for all its distinctive sound, is capable of quite a lot more than you'd expect. If you play around with it and put a humbucker up on the top, it's really versatile. You can get some very rich sounds. Depending on what it's made out of: the maple. I've got two different Telecasters. One is like a feather. The other one, you sink into the ground when you pick it up.

GW Which is the one you call Micawber?

RICHARDS I think that's the heavy one.

GW Do you know what year that is?

RICHARDS Micawber is a '53. And I have a '54 Tele named Malcolm. They always start with "M."

GW Does the Telecaster lend itself especially well to the five-string, open G tuning that has become so integral to your sound? [*In this tuning, the low E string is removed. The remaining strings are tuned, low to high: G, D, G, B, D. "Keef tuning" is the key to such Stones classics as "Honky Tonk Women," "Brown Sugar," "Can't You Hear Me Knocking" and "Start Me Up," among others—Ed.*]

RICHARDS Exactly. Around the same time I was getting into Telecasters I was experimenting with open tunings. I don't know why. Maybe it was because around that time, '67, we started having time off that we didn't know what to do with. So I started to experiment with tunings. Most people used open tuning basically just for slide. Nobody used it for anything else. But I wanted to use it for rhythm guitar. And what I found was, of all the guitars, the Telecaster really lent itself well to a dry, rhythm, five-string drone thing. In a way that tuning kept me developing as a guitarist. "Okay, now figure out a diminished sixth on it!" You've got so little to work with. And that makes you reconsider six-string concert tuning. 'Cause if there's so much in that little space [*i.e., five string*] how much am I missing on the other? You can transfer some of that back to six-string concert tuning. You can swap knowledge between one tuning and another.

GW Whether it's a matter of tunings, arrangements or recording, you've always taken a very open-ended musical approach.

RICHARDS I think you have to. Probably the best example of that is "Sympathy for the Devil," which Mick brought in to the studio as a very Bob Dylan–ish kind of folk guitar song and ended up as a damned samba. 'Cause that's what the band did in the process of recording the song. The thing with a good band is not to put them in the studio and say, "It goes like this." Put them in there and see what they come up with. I've written rock and roll songs that have come out as ballads, and ballads that have come out as rock and roll songs. When we did "Midnight Rambler," nobody went in there with the idea of doing a blues opera, basically. Or a blues in four parts. That's just the way it turned out. I think that's the strength of the Stones or any good band. You can give them a song half raw and they'll cook it.

GW Speaking of "Midnight Rambler," how did you get that incredibly beefy yet crystalline guitar tone on there?

RICHARDS That was done on a full-bodied, Australian electric-acoustic, f-hole guitar. [*The brand name was Maton—Ed.*] It kind of looked like an Australian copy of the Gibson model that Chuck Berry used. I played it on "Gimmie Shelter" too.

GW For the tremolo rhythm part that starts the song off?

RICHARDS Yeah. I used that guitar on all that. It had all been revarnished and painted out, but it sounded great. It made a great record. And on the very last note of "Gimmie Shelter" the whole neck fell off. You can hear it on the original take.

GW Wow. Where'd you get it?

RICHARDS From some guy who stayed at my pad. He crashed out for a couple of days and suddenly left in a hurry, leaving that guitar behind. You know, "Take care of this for me." I certainly did! But it served me well through the album [*Let It Bleed*].

GW *Let It Bleed* was the last Stones album to include Brian Jones—playing percussion on "Midnight Rambler" and autoharp on "You Got the Silver." After all you'd been through with Brian, was it difficult letting go?

RICHARDS Of course. I had a lot of good times with Brian. He was a great musician and a good guy to play with. Especially as guitarists go. Virtuosity is fine, but my thing has always been what two guitar players can get going together. Or three or four. If you get the right guy to play with, you can sound like an orchestra. When you've got that down with

PRIME CUTS

KEITH ON "MISS YOU"

THAT WAS basically Mick's song. He said, "Let's try this disco shit out." I think he'd been to too many nightclubs, actually. The guitar riff basically suggested itself from the melody Mick was singing. I just shadowed that and ran it behind the voice. It's just a piece of fun, that song. It can get really funky if you get the right tempo and slam it in. Basically, you're sitting on Charlie on that.

MICK IN LONDON ON AUG 25, 1963

KPA/ZUMA PRESS

somebody, it's always a pain in the heart when they go somewhere else. But Brian had become impossible. Really over the top. And self-destructive. Not the ordinary, "Oh, he's drinking too much or doing too much of that drug." It was almost starting to feel like he was determined to kill himself in one way or another. I think he wanted to be Mick Jagger and he couldn't understand why he wasn't. That really got to him. Brian was just cantankerous—even to himself. I don't think he liked being comfortable, really. He wanted to be uncomfortable, to the point of death. It had become so unbearable

BILL WYMAN BACKSTAGE AT WEMBLEY STADIUM IN 1973

that Mick and I had to go down and actually fire him. What a rotten task to do. Especially with him not being in good condition. But at the same time, we had to keep the band together.

GW You brought Charlie down as well to Brian's house at Crotchford Farm to give him the news.

RICHARDS Charlie was the backup. We told Brian, "If you don't pull your weight, you're not in, man. If you're not there when we're working, and if you're totally fucked up when you are there..." It was the Beach Boys syndrome, you know? "If it's gonna be like that," we told him, "we can't work together." And he said, "Oh, I've got my own plans and projects, you know." Nobody expected that in a few months he'd be dead.

GW Did you achieve that two-guitar symbiosis with Mick Taylor right away? Did you lock it up quickly?

RICHARDS That's when I learned that everybody's different. But yes, Mick Taylor and I worked really well together. He was very different to work with than Brian. I really had to refocus things. But Mick Taylor is a brilliant guitar player. Some lovely energy. Sweetly sophisticated playing, way beyond his years. Lovely sense of melody. I never understood why he left the Stones. Nor does he, I think. I spoke to him several times and said, "Why did you do it?" I think he felt that he had more to say and could do it more freely outside the Stones. He wanted to be a producer, a writer, more of an all-rounder. Have more say. He wanted to grow up and be his own man. I just think it was an ill-considered decision. It's kind of difficult to step off the Rolling Stones and go somewhere else. I had no desire to see him go. We were lucky after losing Brian to get another guy. Mick and I were working real tight and then it was, "Oh no. Not again."

GW Did you guys really bond during the making of *Exile on Main St.* in France?

RICHARDS Mick's a really shy guy. I wouldn't say that you ever get to know him. I don't think he lets anybody get to know him. Probably the closest I got to Mick was playing guitar. I mean, I knew him well. He was a good mate. But he was always reticent.

GW What's your favorite track from the Mick Taylor period?

RICHARDS I love "Can't You Hear Me Knocking." And "Love in Vain"—the live version. Most of my favorite stuff with Mick is probably onstage. Mick is a great guitar player. But he found out the hard way that that's all he is.

GW Was the jam in the end of "Can't You Hear Me Knocking" inspired by Carlos Santana?

RICHARDS Not really. We didn't even know they were still taping. We thought we'd finished. We were just rambling and they kept the tape rolling. I figured we'd just fade it off. It was only when we heard the playback that we realized, "Oh, they kept it going." Basically we realized we had two bits of music. There's the song and there's the jam.

GW Did you ever use that clear plastic Dan Armstrong/ Ampeg guitar in the studio? I know you used it live a lot, and it's pictured on the original album jacket for [the Stones' 1970 live album] *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out!*

RICHARDS The first guitar Dan Armstrong ever made me was a gem. It was one of the first prototypes or first preproduction models. And you could plug those pickups in. [*The guitar design allowed for interchangeable pickups to be slid in and out of a slot cut in the body—Ed.*] I know I used it on sessions. But I don't know if anything I did on it ended up on a record. And then that guitar disappeared. They gave me two or three other ones, production models, but they were shadows of that particular one. And I gave up on them.

GW Wasn't there an endorsement deal with Ampeg for a while? The Stones used their amps onstage during that late Sixties/early Seventies period and Ampeg even gets a credit line on *Ya-Ya's*.

RICHARDS Yeah, there was. For a while Ampeg had some really good stuff. And they were delivering on time. But it was the same as with the Dan Armstrong guitar. As they got bigger and bigger, the quality of the material went down. It even happened to Gibson. The first Hummingbirds we got the first couple of years were really beautiful. Then they just became stiff.

And guitars, if they're really good, it doesn't matter how old they are. Like anything made of wood, they get better. It's kind of weird, but they haven't really improved the electric guitar since Les Paul and Leo Fender put their touch to it. Everything else is trying to sound like them, with maybe a few more extras—split pickups, 10 different tones... Electronics have come a long way, but the original Telecaster pickup still picks up. With the electric guitar, perfection was made in the beginning. Everything else was then a variation on that. I wouldn't be playing a guitar made in the Fifties if I knew that I could pick one up now and it's just as good.

GW Here's another amazing fact: some of the Stones most celebrated work was done when you were in the depths of heroin addiction. And it wasn't like you were just hanging on for the ride. You had a real leadership

MICHAEL PUTLAND/RETNAUK

> "MUSIC AND DRUGS—*I don't really correlate one thing with the other. One is what you're putting out and the other is what you're putting in.*"

role, particularly on *Exile on Main St.*

RICHARDS Well, you see [*lifting his glass*], I can't even get drunk. I'm a party toxic. I can take anything and I'll never get sloppy drunk. The stuff I was writing and the music I was doing in the Seventies, which is basically when I was on smack, I couldn't have done better straight. And maybe I wouldn't have done as well straight. Music and drugs—I don't really correlate one thing with the other. One is what you're putting out and the other is what you're putting in. I never felt any different about my music because of it. It was more of a separate thing. It was more to keep my own inner self in balance. I never really figured it out. It's just that once you're on smack, it's really difficult to kick it. But it ain't impossible. It's not like getting your leg blown off.

GW When you came off dope in the early Eighties, what was it like facing an audience completely straight for the first time in years?

RICHARDS Pretty damned good. I think it was the crowds backstage and the crowds in the rest of my life that I didn't want to face. Not the audience. I love them always. And when I was doing smack, it was actually very rarely on the road. I would clean up to go on the road. I just didn't want to have that hassle of looking for stuff in strange towns. Which kind of fooled me in a way, 'cause I thought, Oh, I can stop anytime I want. But of course the minute the tour ended, *boom*, I'd say, "Oh, it's time to *relax*." And I'd go straight back in. Mind you, I'm not really putting down dope. But it's something not to get into. And if you are, it's something to get out of.

GW The Stones kicked off the Eighties in fine form with "Start Me Up," which is another classic example of a Rolling Stones song radically changing form during the recording process.

RICHARDS Exactly. I was convinced it was a reggae song. Everybody else was convinced of that. "It's reggae, man." We did 45 takes like that.

GW Did it have that guitar hook when it was a reggae song?

RICHARDS No. It was very Marley-ish. It was sweet. We were all enjoying it. That's why we played it so many times. But then, on a break, I just played that riff, not even really thinking much about it. Which is why it took us five years to find it on the tape. We did a take rocking away and then went back to work and did another 15 reggae takes. So it was stuck in the middle there. A lot of great things can happen when you're focusing on something else. I pride myself on being able to spot those things. So the fact that I missed "Start Me

RON AND KEITH LIVE AT TWICKENHAM STADIUM, LONDON, SEPTEMBER 20, 2003

AWAIS/LFI

Up" for five years is one of my disappointments. But you can't catch everything.

GW What songs did you want to put on *40 Licks* to represent the Eighties?

RICHARDS Difficult period. Which is probably why you won't find a lot from the Eighties on there. There's a couple of good things on *Dirty Work*. Let me put it this way: "Undercover of the Night" is not going to be on there.

GW As you say, a difficult period for the Stones.

RICHARDS For me, particularly. I'd been on dope throughout most of the Seventies. And I had let Mick take over quite a lot of day-to-day stuff about the Stones. So he fell into that same syndrome as Brian, of thinking that he'd run the show. When I got off the dope I said to Mick, "I'm willing to take on some of this stuff again. Let me shoulder some of your burden." Mick took that to mean that I wanted to reassert power, or take power away from him, which wasn't really the case. He'd gotten used to running things and he didn't want to relinquish that. I went through a very tough thing in the early Eighties with Mick. So you get some songs like "All About You," to name just one. There's more on some of the Winos records [*Keith's side project, the X-pensive Winos—Ed.*].

That whole period culminated in 1985, at the end of *Dirty Work*, which was our World War III. He'd become so high-handed with everybody that it was just unacceptable to me. So we said, "Okay, let's take a break and see what we can do on our own then." I think that everybody—with the possible exception of Mick himself—has learned the lesson that Mick Jagger's really good when he's with the Rolling Stones. But when he ain't, I don't think anybody gives a fuckin' toss. Whether he gets the message or not. Obviously he does. Otherwise he wouldn't be on this project.

GW What do you think of his latest solo album, *Goddess in the Doorway*?

RICHARDS What, *Dog Shit in the Doorway*? I listened to three tracks and gave up on it. Sometimes you wonder. With the Stones he's great. It's best to keep him on a short leash.

2002

GW How do you rate Mick Jagger as a guitar player?

RICHARDS On acoustic, he's a damned good rhythm player. I'd never let him play electric if I could help it. He's like Bob Dylan, same thing. They thrash away at it. No sense of electric at all. Usually I turn him down.

GW "Sway" is Mick on electric.

RICHARDS Yeah... Well, like I say, acoustically he's got a nice touch. It doesn't translate electrically. It's not his thing. It's not everybody's cup of tea.

GW So if the Eighties were a difficult period for the Stones, how do you rate the Nineties?

RICHARDS The Nineties were interesting. There's almost five years between *Dirty Work* and *Steel Wheels*. *Steel Wheels* was a very tentative restart, in a way. It was almost another chapter. Certainly there was a lot of energy in there. And *Voodoo Lounge* I really enjoyed making. It's a good record.

GW The sound toughened up appreciably on that.

RICHARDS Yeah. *Steel Wheels* was a good beginning and *Voodoo Lounge* came up from there. But things were changing in the Nineties. Our tours were just great. Basically we're a live band. We love making records, but playing live is what we're all about. Throughout the Eighties and Nineties, suddenly we were in the new era of MTV and synthesizers—where every record is judged by what it looks like, not what it sounds like. To me, this is all starting to lose touch with what we're all about. And really what any band is all about.

GW Speaking of playing live, is there any chance—this being a 40th anniversary tour—that there will be special guest stars from the Stones' past? Mick Taylor? Bill Wyman?

RICHARDS Well, who knows? Those things kind of happen along the way. We're certainly not ruling it out. Everybody's really up for it. When Mick, Charlie, Ronnie and I were in Paris, it was great to hear about tickets selling out in four minutes. But we also said, "There go our days off. 'Cause they'll want to add extra shows." After all these years, for me, it's great to get out there, do what I do, meet the folks and have a good time. There's enough trouble in this world. Let's take some time off, pals, and have a good time. ✣

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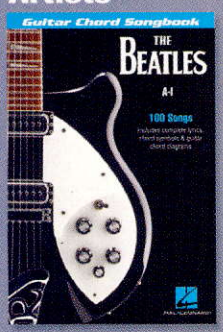

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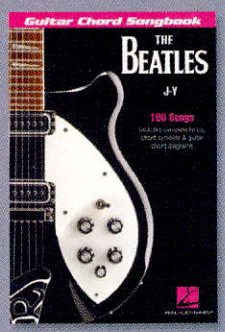

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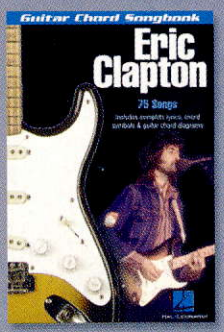

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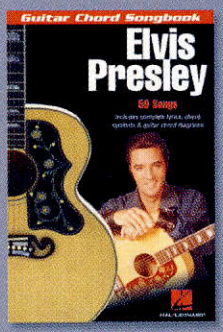

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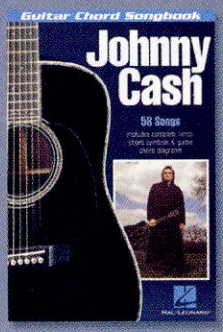

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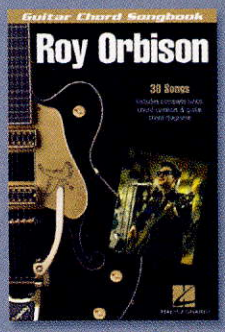

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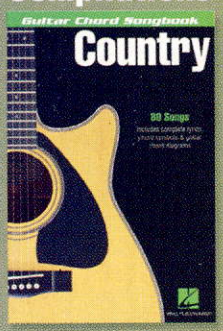

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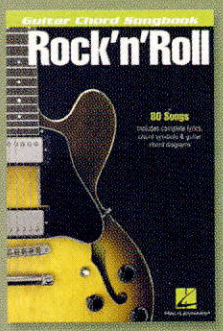

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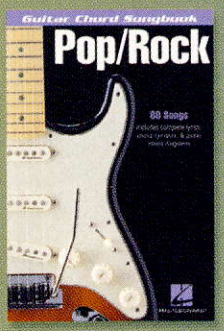

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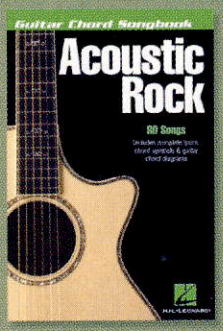

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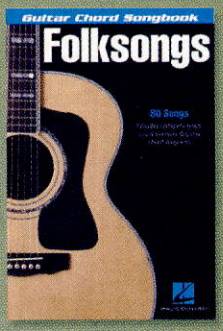

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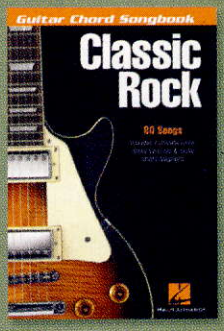

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G Whiz

HOW TO PLAY LIKE KEITH RICHARDS, MASTER OF OPEN G TUNING.

BY KEITH WYATT

Watching Keith Richards onstage, it takes only a little imagination to picture a ripsaw in his right hand as he hunches over his wooden plank, his right arm flailing from shoulder and elbow. Richards is hardly the picture of finesse and subtlety, but try to recreate his sound while sitting down with a guitar "properly" positioned on your lap and you'll soon discover how purposeful his demonic carpentry really is.It ain't just stadium choreography; it's a personal matter that involves virtually scraping down the top of that Tele and dragging the rhythm from inside out. ¶ An electric guitar in the hands of someone like Richards is a percussion instrument. Great rhythm players approach the guitar like a drum, with the pick creating the same kind of rhythmic patterns on the strings that the sticks do on the skins. Achieving a drummer's looseness and power is difficult, though, if you're overly worried about which strings are okay to strum or not in a given chord voicing. Learning to dampen certain strings with the fretting hand in order to mute unwanted notes is one way of freeing the picking hand, but technically this can be a difficult approach to master, as it forces you to stand still and concentrate on fingering instead of losing yourself in the rhythm. If the strings are all tuned to a single chord, however, you're free to look, listen, move around, and whack those strings with complete abandon. »

All examples are played in open G tuning (low to high D G D G B D).

FIGURE 1 slide box pattern in G

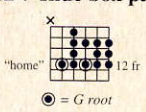


FIGURE 2 slide box pattern in G

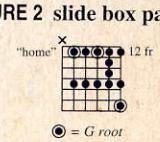


FIGURE 3

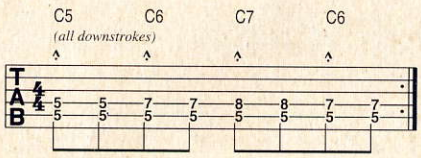
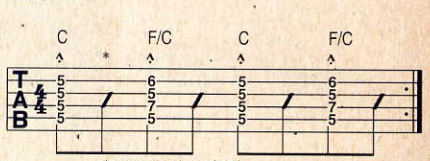


FIGURE 4



JIM MARSHALL

Gibson

DURING THE PRE-WAR acoustic-blues era, open tunings were common not just among slide players but among country blues guitarists in general. A country blues style was, almost by definition, handed down personally from player to player without reference to a common method. And let's face it: if nobody's there to teach you the "right" way to play, only a fool or a scientist would tune a guitar to the kind of nonsense chord you would get in standard tuning. An open tuning lets you concentrate on the beat and the song without worrying about a bunch of complicated fingerings. And for Richards, the beat and the song have always been the thing.

The Stones had already had a complete career, by rock standards, when they took a year off to recuperate in 1967. In an effort to inspire and refresh his own playing, Richards spent the time listening to older and more esoteric recordings from back before his prime influence, Chuck Berry. At the same time, he began hanging out with tradition-oriented players such as Taj Mahal and Ry Cooder and absorbing their styles and influences. Through intense listening, informal tutoring and his natural inclination toward attitude over technique, Richards quickly saw the potential that could come of performing on the electric guitar in open G tuning, using the instrument not for slide playing but as the basis of a rock rhythm guitar sound. The puzzle pieces of tradition and innovation suddenly came together.

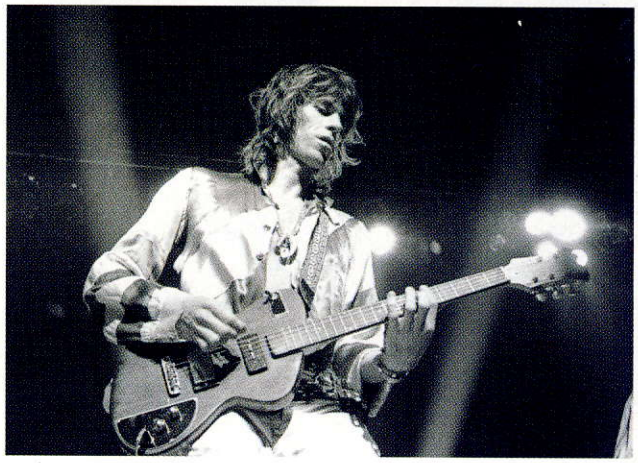
In this lesson, we're going to build your skills in this tuning by following roughly the same path that Keith did, starting with the basics. To begin with, open tunings recreate the sound of common open-position chords by turning the open strings to chord tones, thereby grouping all of the "good" notes onto one fret. There are two main open tunings in common use: open E and open A. In open E, the strings are tuned to the open E major chord, with the root on the sixth string (low to high: E B E G♯ B E). Its cousin, open D, sounds one whole step lower in pitch (low to high: D A D F♯ A D). Open A tunes to an open major chord, with the root on the fifth string (low to high: E A E A C♯ E). Its cousin, open G, employs the same interval scheme one whole step lower (low to high: D G D B G D). Richards had already used open E and D tunings for his rhythm parts in "Jumpin' Jack Flash" and "Street Fighting Man," respectively, but it was the sound of open G, used extensively by both Robert Johnson and Muddy Waters, that stuck in his head.

FIGURE 1 illustrates one of the most common "box" patterns for playing slide guitar melodies in open G tuning. Locate the root note of any major chord on the fifth string ("home," in this case, G at the 12th fret), and this shape will fit around it. **FIGURE 2** shows the notes that extend above the "home" fret. Because of the tuning, notes are duplicated from string to string. Both patterns are unlike normal, standard-tuning pentatonic patterns inasmuch as they combine chord tones and scale tones. The ear must choose, but the notes at the "home" fret, which are all tuned to the same major chord, are more or less guaranteed.

Richards first got into open G tuning by playing slide, but he was drawn more to the big, resonant sound of the resulting chords than to the high, sweet melodic approach favored by most players who use (and used) open G. These one-finger chords were the jumping-off point for what was to become one of the most recognizable and influential rhythm guitar styles in the history of rock.

One of the first things you might notice when hitting an open or single-finger barre chord in open G tuning is that the root is on the fifth string, which means that the sixth string must be muted to avoid muddying up the low end. This is exactly the sort of complication that Richards was trying to get away from, and he fixed it in an ingenious way: he not only removed the sixth string but also had a guitar custom built and set up with only the five upper strings. For most of us, this is not a practical solution, but with a little practice you can train the tip of your fret-hand index finger to lightly touch the sixth string without pressing it down, effectively muting it. All of the phrases are then built on the five higher strings and almost all of the action is on the middle three.

Let's begin building a rhythm style by starting with the basic Chuck Berry rhythm pattern (**FIGURE 3**). Since the index finger holds down all the necessary chord tones, the ring finger and pinkie can add the extra notes on the fourth string without the usual stretch.



KEITH AT THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER IN HONOLULU, HAWAII, JANUARY 1973

A word here about touch: although the picking hand is essentially free to bash away, there are a few subtleties to the Richards sound that make it so distinctive. For this rhythm pattern, use all downstrokes and accent the downbeats (where your foot hits the floor). Release the pressure of your fretting hand against the strings right after each downbeat to produce a clipped (*staccato*) attack, but maintain your left-hand grip after strumming the softer upbeats to get a longer (*marcatto*) sustain. Play it right and you've got the core rhythm guitar groove of the Rolling Stones' mid-Seventies song catalog: *DUT-dah-DUT-dah-DUT-dah-DUT-dah.*

Next, place your middle finger on the B string, one fret above the index-finger barre. This replaces the third chord tone with the fourth, creating a "suspended fourth" or "sus4" chord. Now add the ring finger to the D string, two frets up from the barre, and you create a IV chord (in the key of G the IV chord would be C; in the key of C the IV chord would be F), yielding the basic I-IV chord move heard in such Stones classics as "Honky

PRIME CUTS

KEITH ON "START ME UP"

I WAS CONVINCED that was a reggae song. Everybody else was convinced of that. "It's reggae, man." We did 45 takes like that. But then on a break I just played that guitar riff, not even really thinking much about it; we did a take rocking away and then went back to work and did another 15 reggae takes. Five years later, Mick discovered that one rock take in the middle of the tape and realized how good it was. The fact that I missed "Start Me Up" for five years is one of my disappointments. It just went straight over my head. But you can't catch everything.

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Tonk Women," "Brown Sugar" and "Start Me Up." It is the essential Keith Richards *sound*. **FIGURE 4** shows the modified Chuck Berry–style rhythm pattern using this new combination. Let the picking hand go free to strum the guitar with a big, elbow-centered motion, using alternating downstrokes and upstrokes. Again, hit the downbeats harder and momentarily relax the fret hand's grip on the strings right after each downbeat (downstroke strum).

Once everything starts to click, experiment with different fret-hand accents and combinations of fingering extensions while moving your index-finger barre around to different positions (the first string can be included or not), using the same basic strumming pattern. A virtual Rolling Stones discography will begin to spill forth (see **FIGURES 5 and 6**). You don't need complete transcriptions to play these types of riffs, just some loose shoes, a good ear, a relaxed arm and some attitude. By the way, Stones records of the late Sixties/early Seventies were mixed with Keith's guitar panned hard to one side and Mick Taylor's to the other. Use your stereo system's balance control to isolate the rhythm figures for closer study.

As a final refinement, hold your index finger down and use your remaining digits to find every "extension" that sounds decent when played together with the basic one-finger barre chord. You'll probably wind up with a set of notes like those illustrated in **FIGURE 7** (notice that it's like **FIGURE 2** with a few more notes). Most of these combinations are essentially major or dominant seventh chord-based sounds, as is the vast bulk of the Stones songbook. Putting these notes together in different combinations can yield some cool-sounding chord riffs that are relatively easy to play. Keith uses these types of shapes to great effect in "Honky Tonk Women" (**FIGURE 8**), "Can't You Hear Me Knocking" (*Sticky Fingers*) (**FIGURE 9**), "Monkey Man" (*Let It Bleed*) and, with a capo at the fourth fret, on "Tumblin' Dice" (*Exile on Main Street*). One can't help but wonder whether "Can't You Hear Me Knocking" served as inspiration for Jimmy Page's bittersweet open G riffing on Zeppelin's "Dancing Days."

As mentioned earlier, including the first string with chord grips that use more fingers than just the straight barre can yield to some rich, beautiful voicings that are virtually impossible to achieve in standard tuning. Richards has used this *add9* voicing with great results in more than a few Stones favorites such as "19th Nervous Breakdown" and "Happy," as well as "Brown Sugar" and "Start Me Up."

To play a movable minor chord in open G tuning, you have to use either an index-finger/pinkie barre combination, as illustrated in **FIGURE 10**, or the more complex fingering scheme shown in **FIGURE 11**. But the tricky stuff kind of defeats the purpose, doesn't it? If you want to play minor riffs while enjoying and exploiting all the advantages that a tuning like open G offers, you can detune your second string to B♭ to produce an open G *minor* chord (G B♭ D) on the top three strings, which you can then transpose to any other key by using a capo or simply barring your index finger behind any given fret. You can always make the chord major by fretting the second string one fret above the barre with your middle finger. Experiment, and let your ears and heart guide you. ❖

FIGURE 5 "Brown Sugar" intro

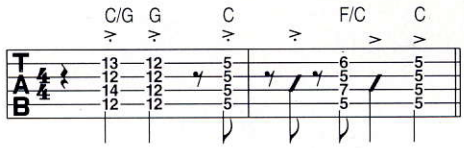


FIGURE 6 "Honky Tonk Women" 1st chorus (0:50)

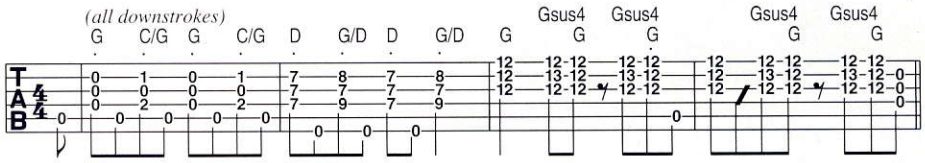


FIGURE 7 C barre chord extensions

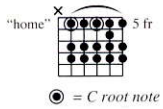


FIGURE 8 "Honky Tonk Women" verse (0:17)

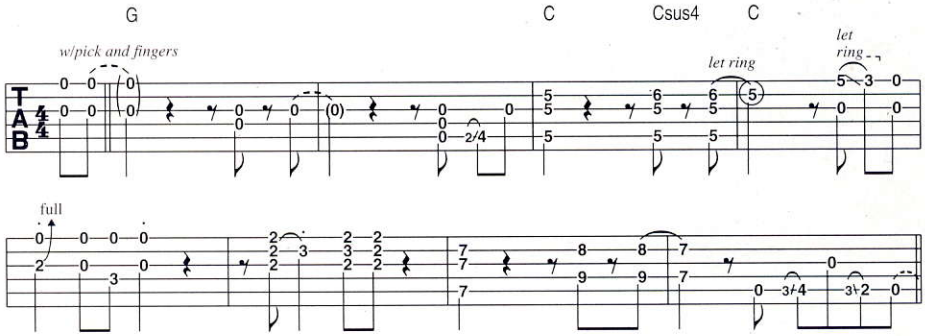


FIGURE 9 "Can't You Hear Me Knockin'" intro

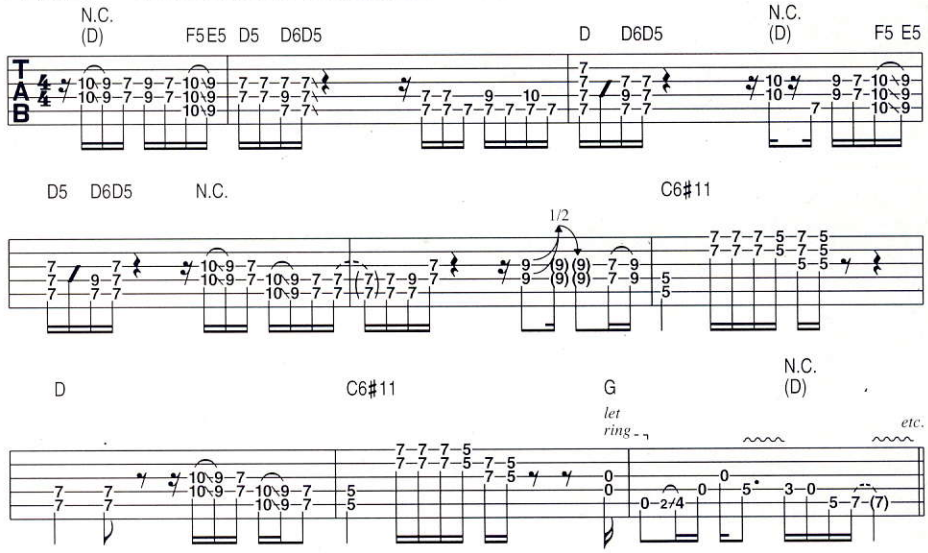


FIGURE 10

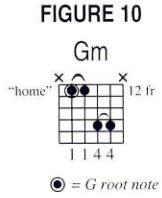
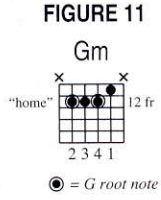



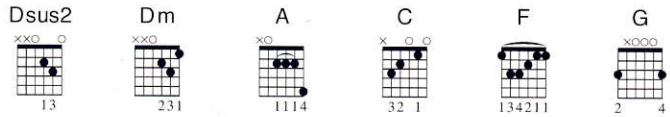
FIGURE 11



"PAINT IT, BLACK"

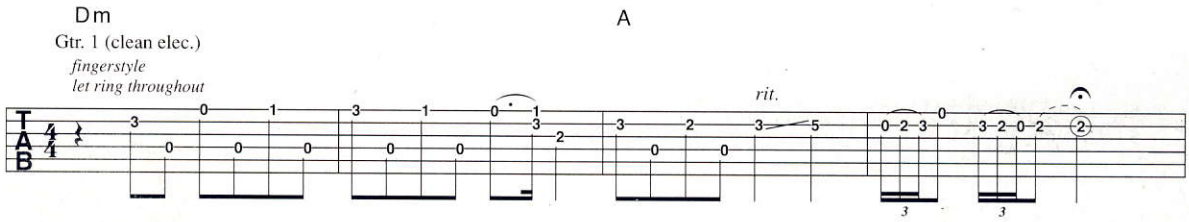
As heard on **THROUGH THE PAST, DARKLY (BIG HITS VOL. 2)** (ABKCO)
Words and Music by **Mick Jagger** & **Keith Richards** • *Transcribed by* **Jeff Perrin**

Gtrs. 1 and 2 w/capo at third fret.
All chord shapes and tabulature positions are relative to the capo.
All notes and chords sound in the key of F minor, one and one half steps higher than written.
To play along with the recording, tune all strings down one quarter step.

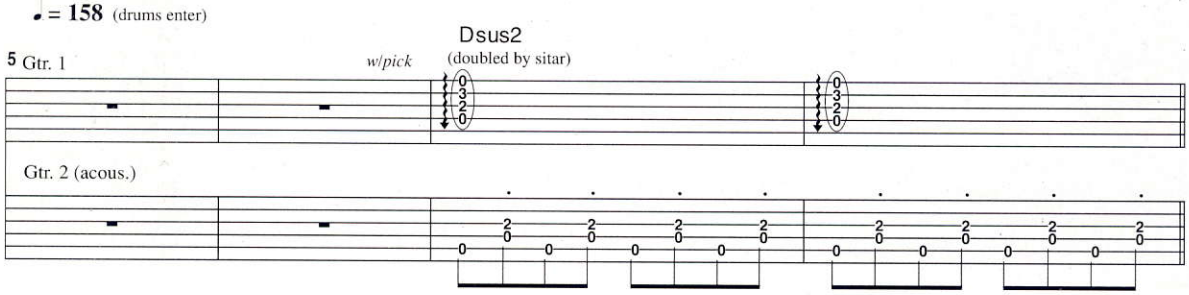


A **Intro** (0:00)

Freely

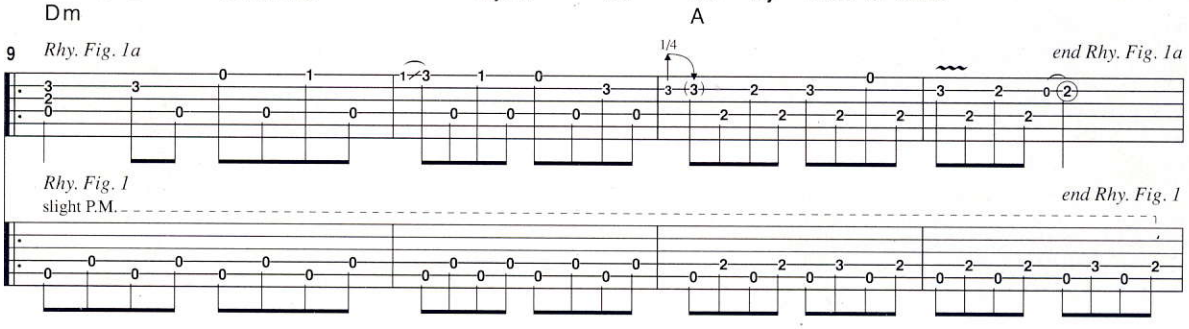


♩ = 158 (drums enter)

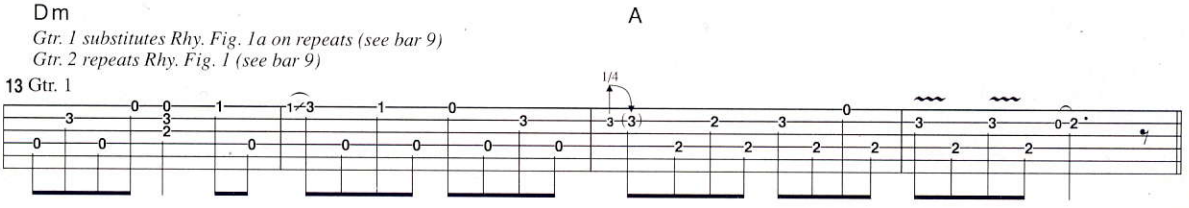


B **Verses** (0:15, 0:39, 1:03, 1:52)

1., 4.	I	see	a	red	door	and I	want	it	painted	black
2.	I	see	a	line	of	cars and	they're	all	painted	black
3.	I	look	inside		myself	and	see	my	heart	is black



No	colors	anymore		I	want	them	to	turn	black
with	flowers	and	my love	both		never	to	come	back
I	see	my	red	door	I must	have	it	painted	black



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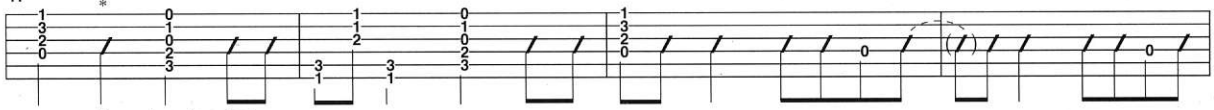
C Chorus (0:27, 0:51, 1:15, 1:40, 2:04)

(1., 5.) I see the girls go by dressed in their summer clothes
(2.) I see people turn their heads and quickly look away
(3.) Maybe then I'll fade away and not have to face the facts
(4.) If I look hard enough into the setting sun

Dm C F C Dm

Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill 1 second, third and fifth times (see below)
Gtr. 1 substitutes Rhy. Fill 2 fourth time (see below)

17 Gtrs. 1 and 2

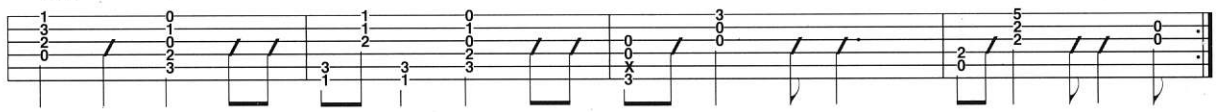


**repeat previous beat*

(1st, 2nd and 4th Choruses) go back to **B** *Verse*
(3rd Chorus) move on to **D** *Breakdown*
(5th Chorus) skip ahead to **E** *Outro*

I have to turn my head until my darkness goes
Like a newborn baby it just happens every day
It's not easy facin' up when your whole world is black
My love will laugh with me before the morning comes

21 Dm C F C G A

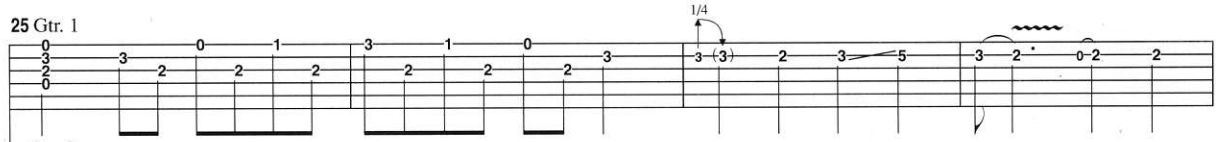


D Breakdown (1:27)

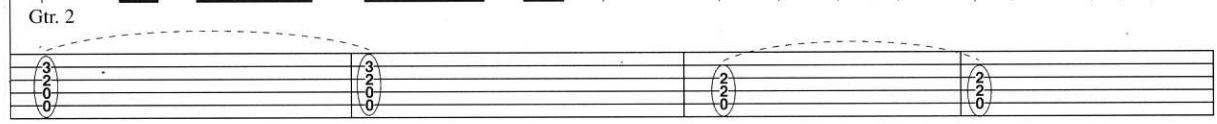
No more will my green sea go turn a deeper blue

Dsus2 A

25 Gtr. 1



Gtr. 2

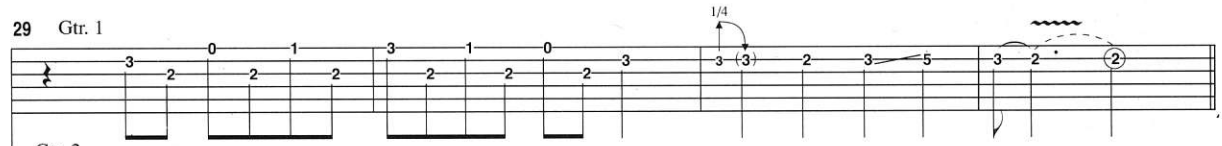


go back to **C** *Chorus*

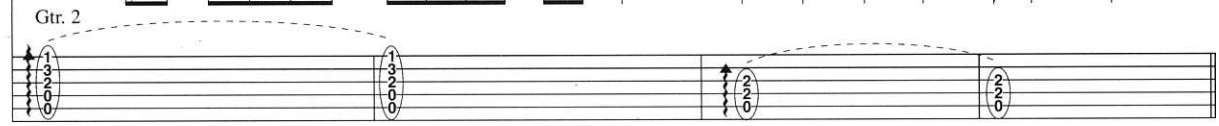
I could not foresee this thing happening to you

Dm A

29 Gtr. 1

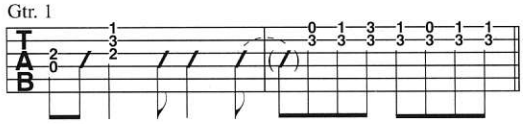


Gtr. 2



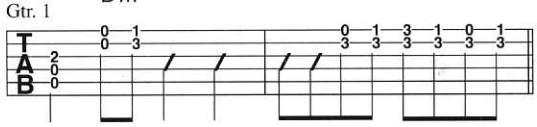
Rhy. Fill 1 (0:54, 1:18, 2:07)

Dm

Gtr. 1

Rhy. Fill 2 (1:42)

Dm

Gtr. 1



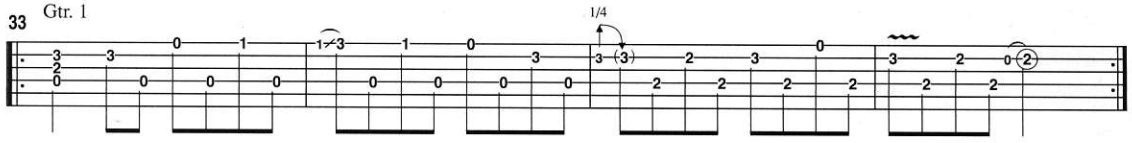
E **Outro** (2:16)

Hmm...

Dm A

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 three times (see bar 9) *(play 3 times)*

33 Gtr. 1

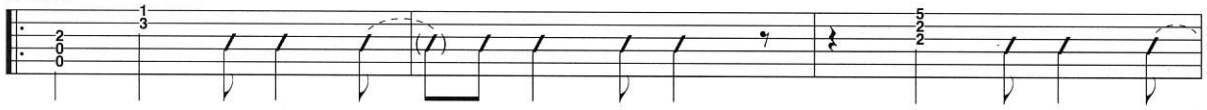


(1.) Hmm...

(2.) wanna see the sun blotted out from the sky

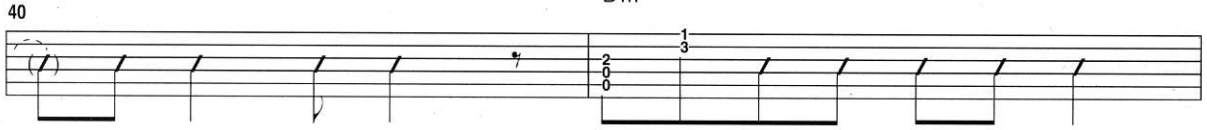
Dm A

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 until fade (see bar 9)

37 Gtr. 1

I wanna see it painted
I wanna see it painted painted

Dm

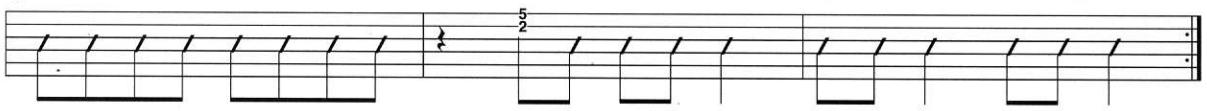
40



painted black painted black as night black as coal I
painted painted black yeah

A

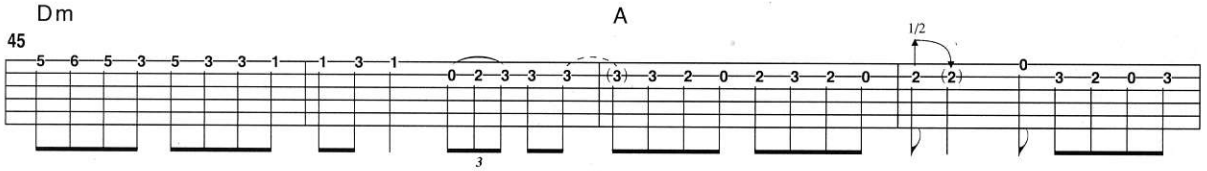
42



Hmm...

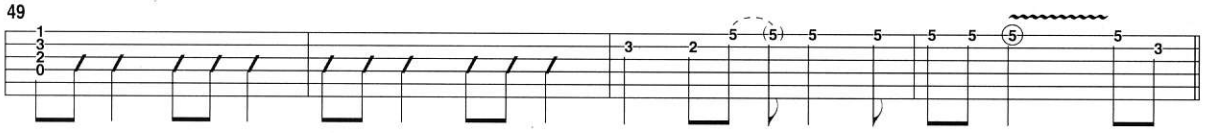
Dm A

45

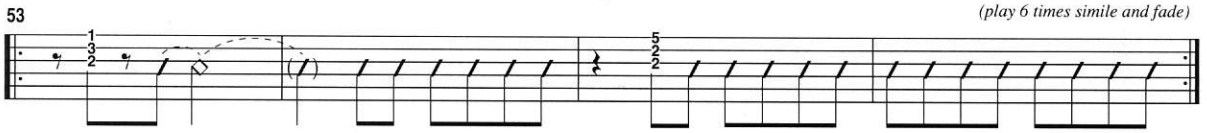


Hmm...

Dm A

49

Hmm...

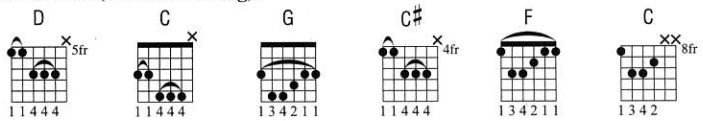
Dm A

53 *(play 6 times simile and fade)*

"CAN'T YOU HEAR ME KNOCKING"

As heard on **STICKY FINGERS** (VIRGIN)
Words and Music by **Mick Jagger** & **Keith Richards** • *Transcribed by* **Jeff Perrin**

Gtr. 1 is in open G tuning (low to high: D G D G B D).

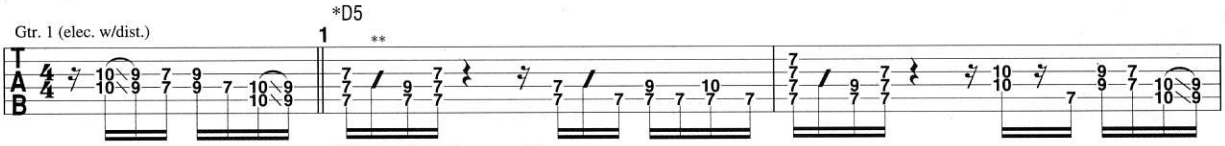
Gtr. 2 chords (standard tuning):

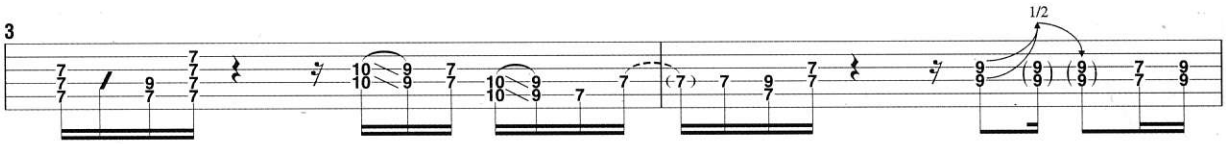
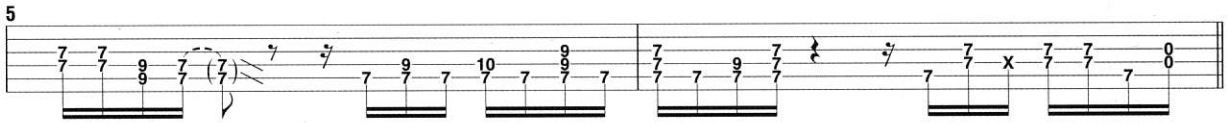


A **Intro** (0:00)

Moderately Slow ♩ = 74

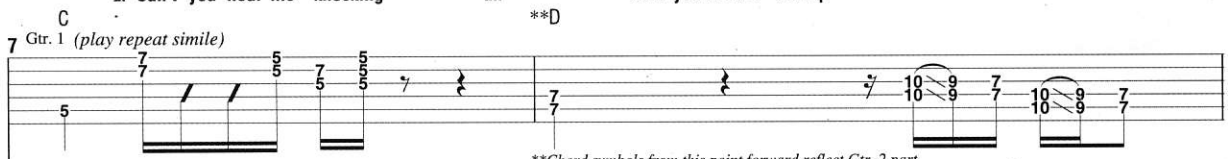
Gtr. 1 (elec. w/dist.)



**Chord symbol reflects overall harmony.*
***repeat previous chord*



B **Verses** (0:21, 1:30)

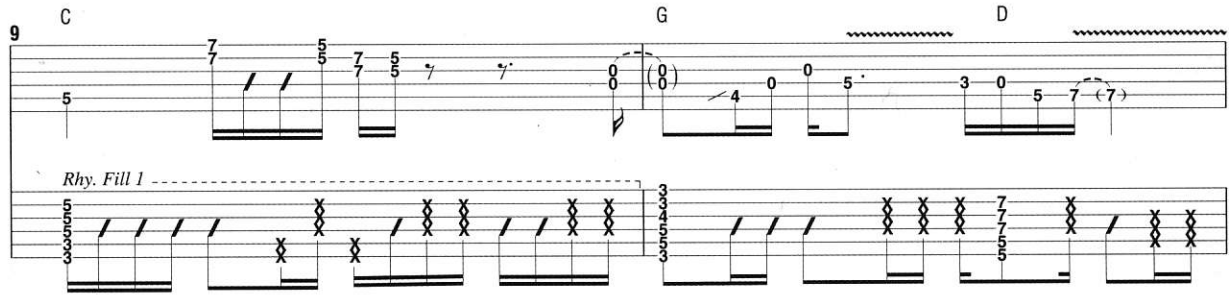
1. Yeah you got satin shoes
2. Can't you hear me knocking ah now you're safe asleep



***Chord symbols from this point forward reflect Gr. 2 part.*

Gtr. 2 (clean elec.)
Substitute Rhy. Fill 1 second time (see bar 9)

Yeah you got fancy boots
Can't you hear me knocking yeah down the gas - light street now



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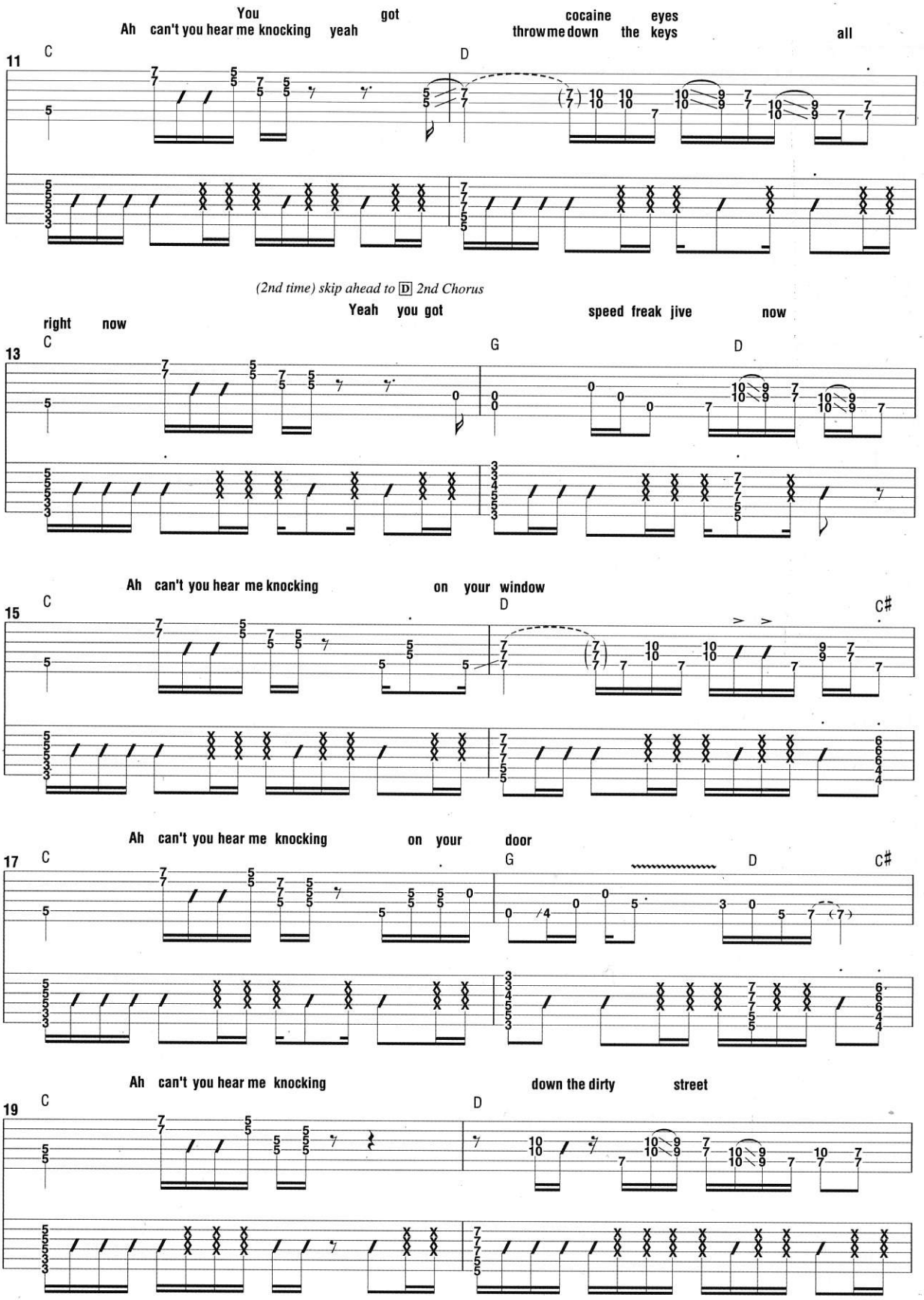
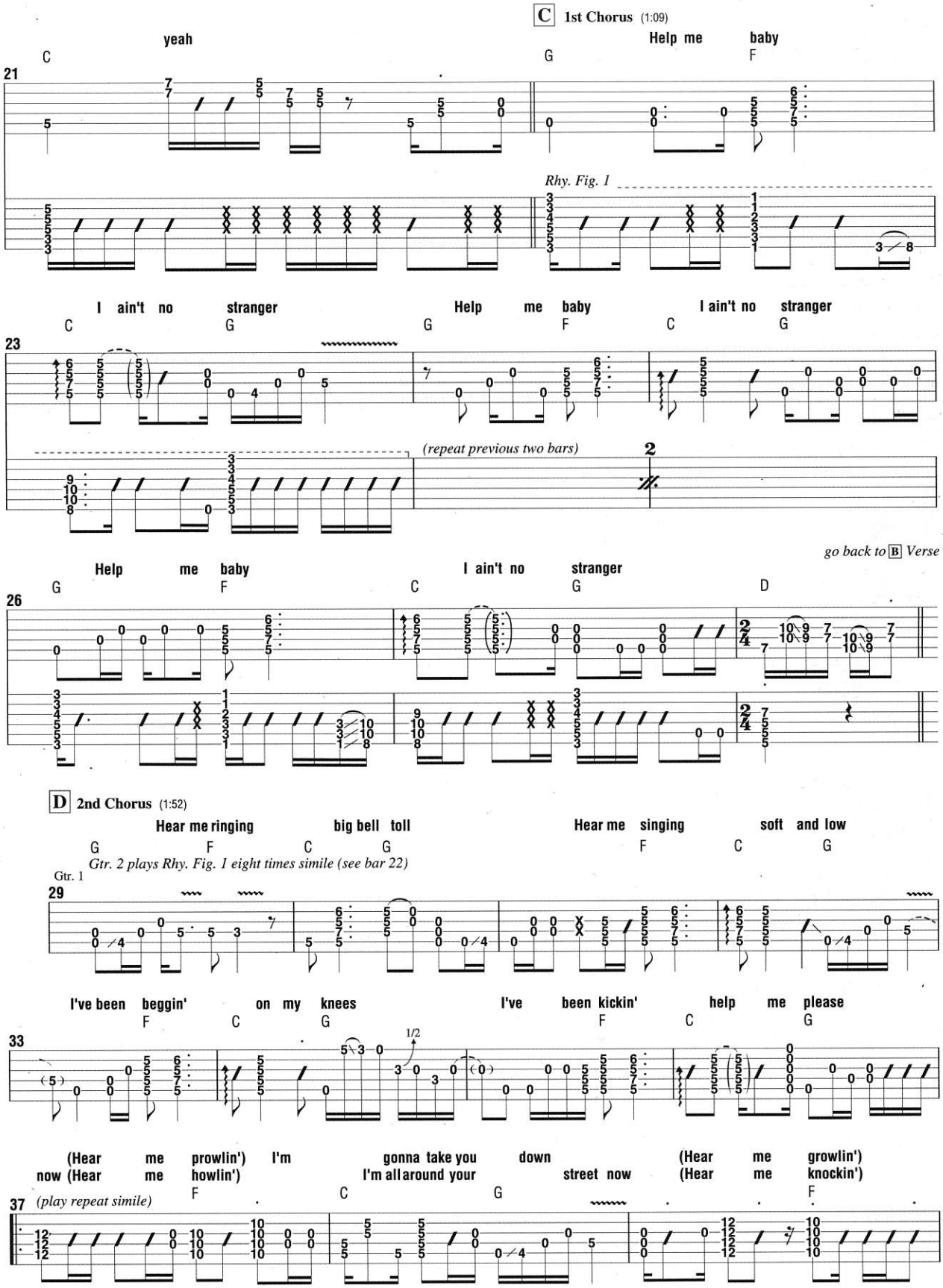
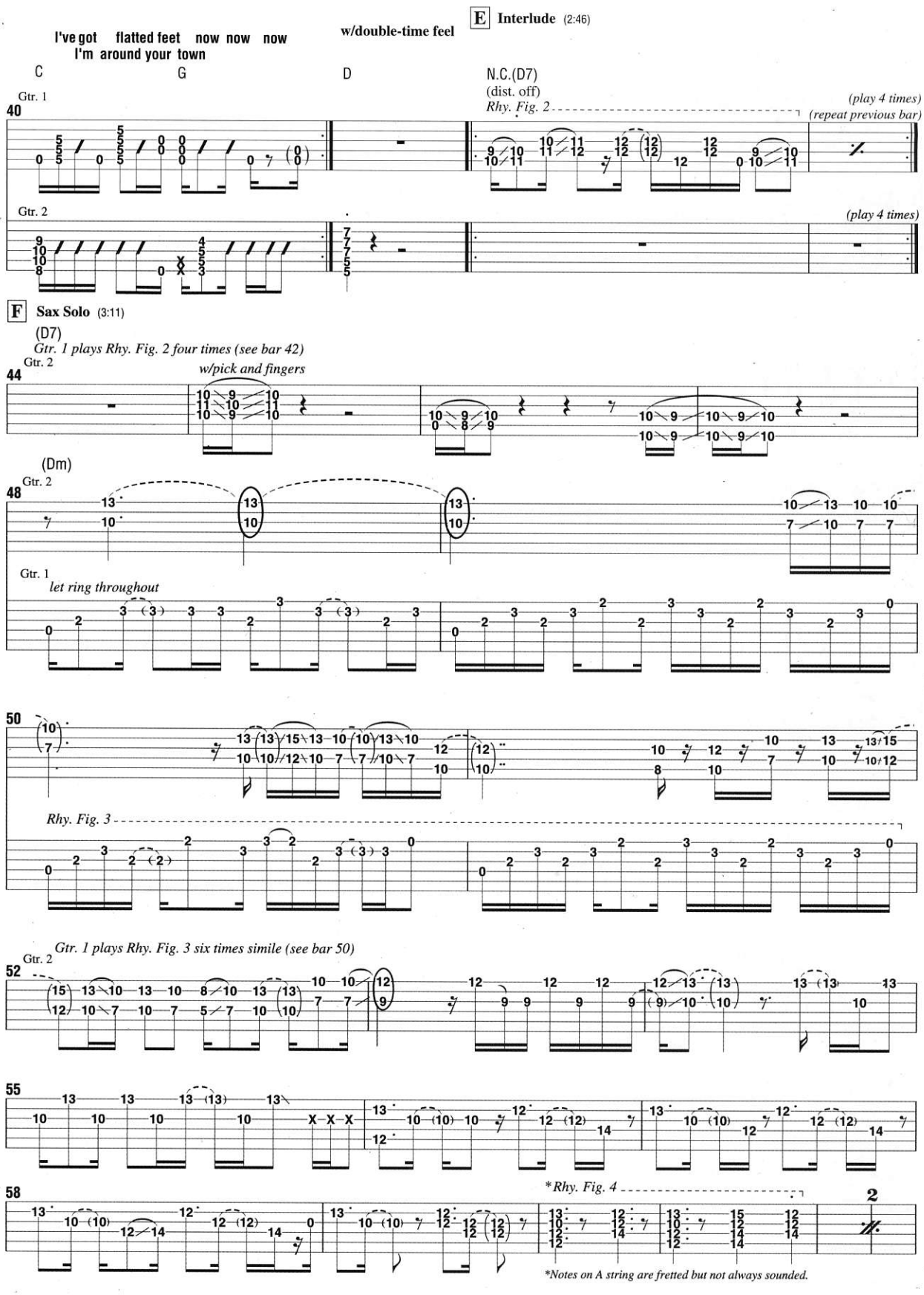
"CAN'T YOU HEAR ME KNOCKING"

C 1st Chorus (1:09)
yeah
Help me baby
C
G
F
21
Rhy. Fig. 1
I ain't no stranger
Help me baby
I ain't no stranger
C
G
G
F
C
G
23
(repeat previous two bars)
2
go back to B Verse
Help me baby
I ain't no stranger
G
F
C
G
D
26
D 2nd Chorus (1:52)
Hear me ringing
big bell toll
Hear me singing
soft and low
G
F
C
G
F
C
G
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 eight times simile (see bar 22)
Gtr. 1
29
I've been beggin'
on my knees
I've been kickin'
help me please
F
C
G
F
C
G
1/2
33
(Hear me prowlin')
I'm gonna take you down
(Hear me growlin')
now (Hear me howlin')
I'm all around your street now
(Hear me knockin')
F
C
G
F
37
(play repeat simile)

"CAN'T YOU HEAR ME KNOCKING"



(4:14)

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 twice (see bar 60)

64 Gtr. 1

P.M.

Gtr. 2 plays first bar of Rhy. Fig. 4 four times (see bar 60)

67

cont. simile

G **Guitar Solo** (4:40)

(Dm)

Gtr. 2

70

Gtr. 1 (w/dist.)

Rhy. Fig. 5

end Rhy. Fig. 5

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 5 four times simile (see bar 70)

74 Gtr. 2

(w/light dist.)

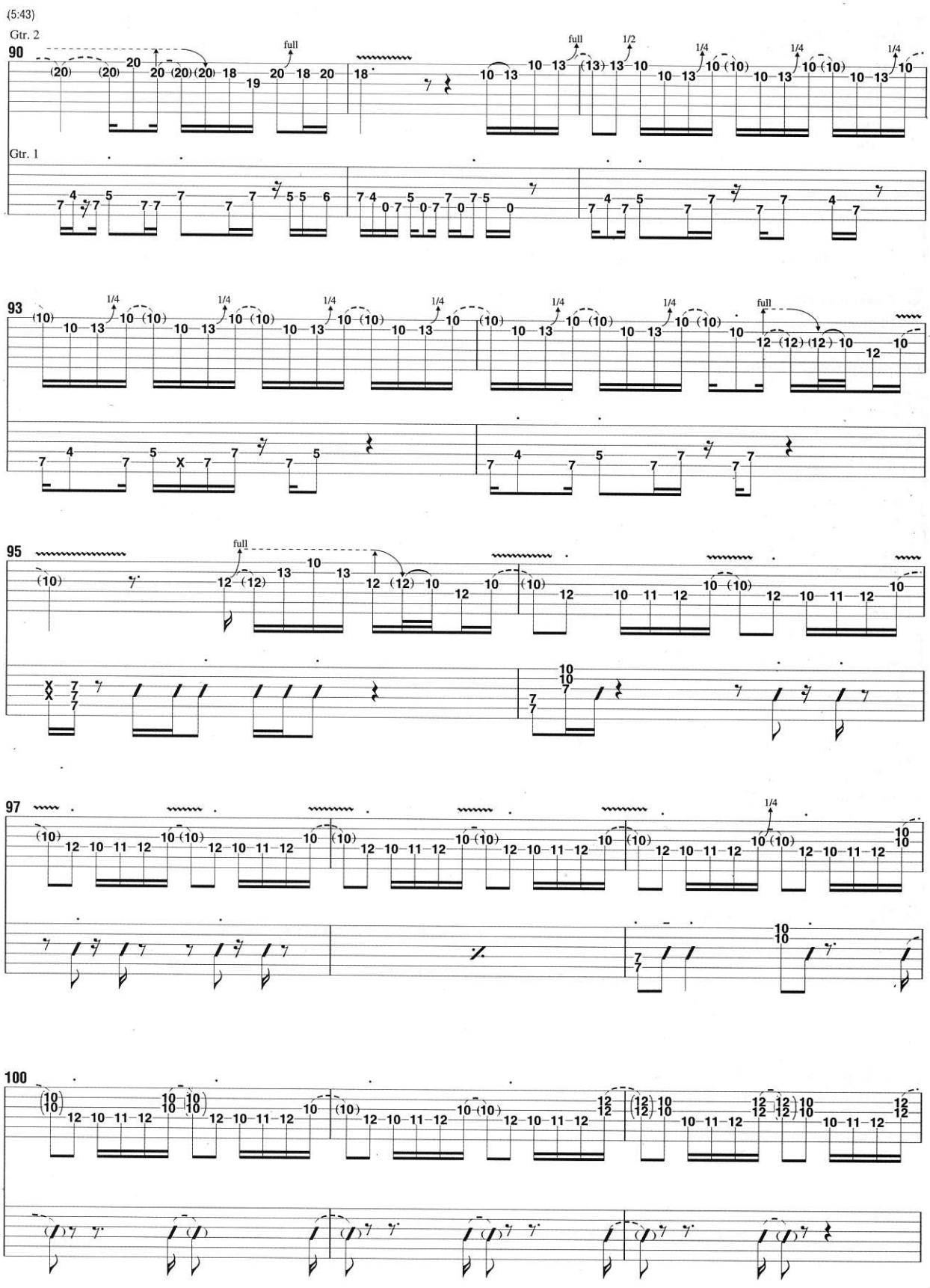
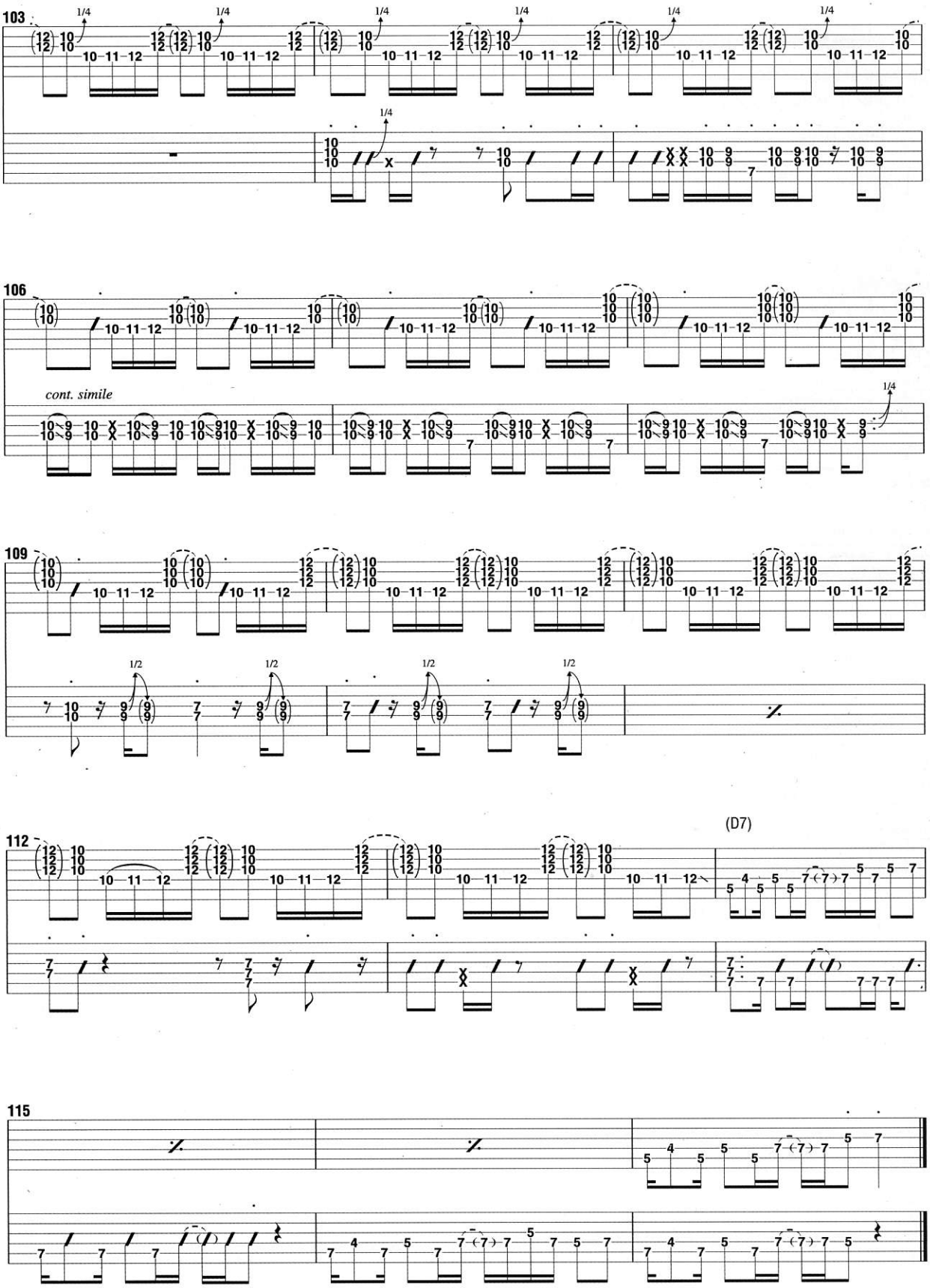
let ring

78

81

84

87

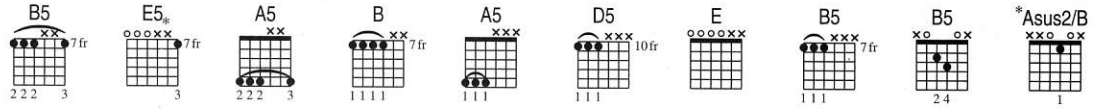
"CAN'T YOU HEAR ME KNOCKING"

103
106
cont. simile
109
112
(D7)
115

"JUMPIN' JACK FLASH"

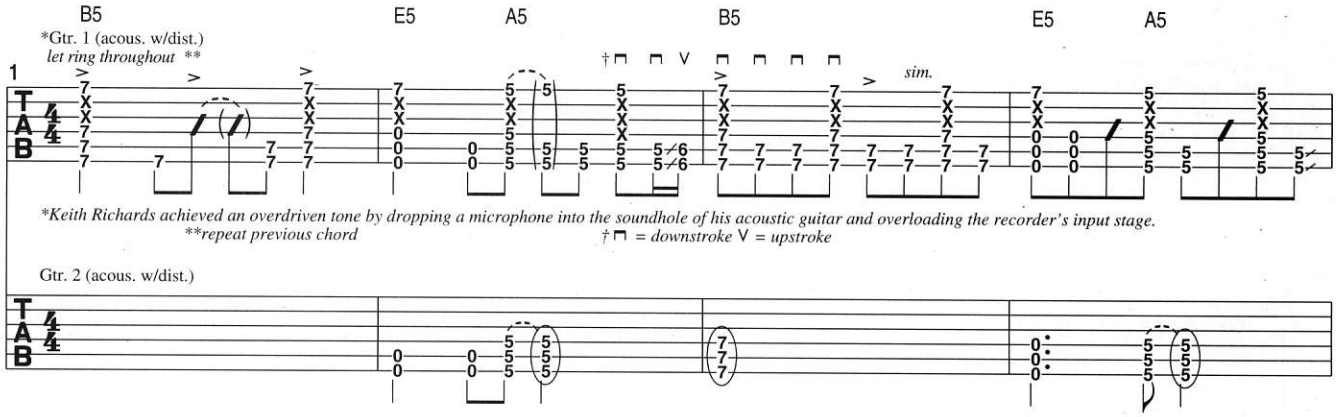
As heard on **GET YER YA-YA'S OUT** (ABKCO)
Words and Music by **Mick Jagger** & **Keith Richards** • *Transcribed by* **Jeff Perrin**

All guitars are in open E tuning (low to high: E B E G♯ B E), approximately one quarter-step flat.
Bass tuning (low to high): E A D G, approximately one quarter-step flat.

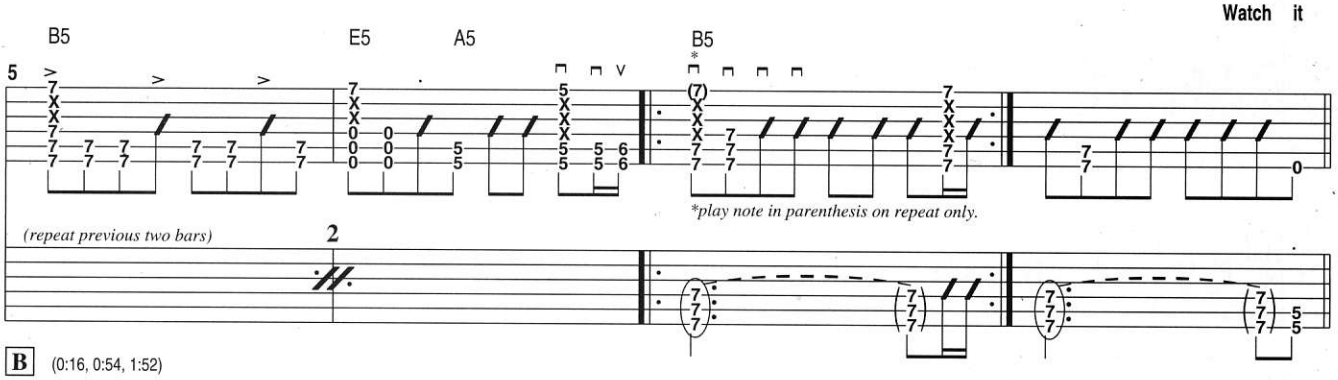
intro grips



A **Intro** (0:00)
Moderately ♩ = 136

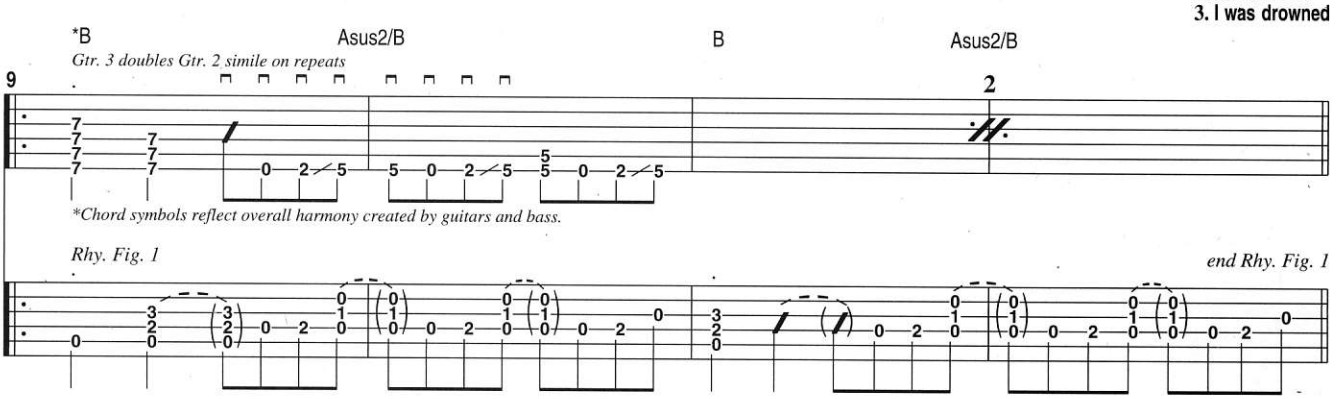


*Keith Richards achieved an overdriven tone by dropping a microphone into the soundhole of his acoustic guitar and overloading the recorder's input stage.
**repeat previous chord
†⊓ = downstroke ∨ = upstroke



B (0:16, 0:54, 1:52)

1. I was born
2. I was raised
3. I was drowned



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C Verses (0:23, 1:01, 1:59)

(1.) in a cross-fire hurricane
(2.) by a toothless bearded hag
(3.) I was washed up and left for dead
(3.) at the crumbs of a crust of bread

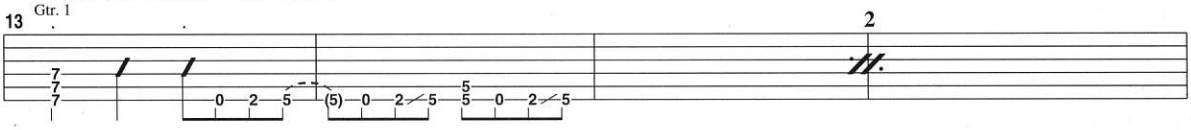
And I howled
I was schooled
I fell down
I was crowned

Yeah yeah yeah

B5 Asus2/B B5 Asus2/B

Gtr. 2 repeats Rhy. Fig. 1 simile (see bar 9)

13 Gtr. 1

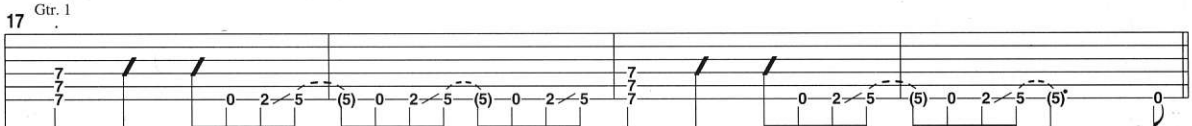


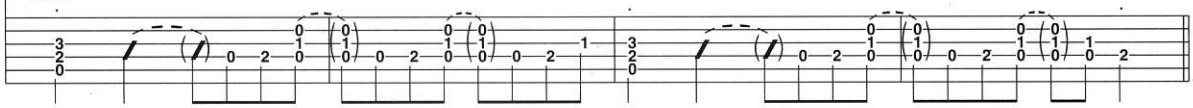
(3rd time) go back to Verse C

at my ma in the driving rain
with a strap right across my back
to my feet and I saw they bled
with a spike right through my head

But it's all
But it's all
Yeah yeah I frowned
Ah oh yeah But it's all

B5 Asus2/B B5 Asus2/B

17 Gtr. 1

Gtr. 2

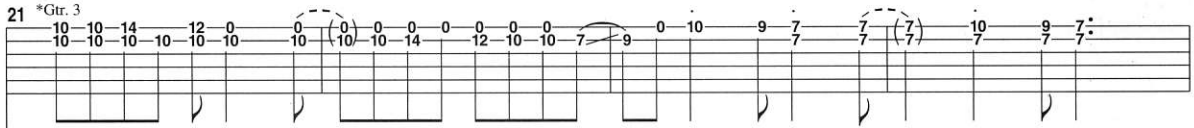


D Chorus (0:37, 1:15, 2:27)

right now in fact it's a gas But it's all

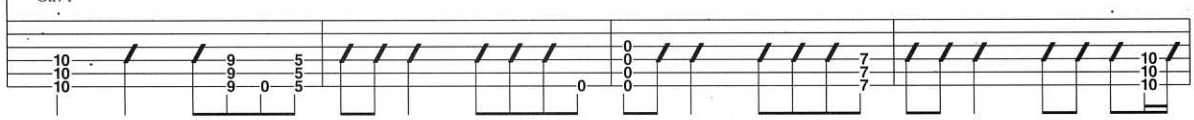
D5 A5 E B5 D5

21 *Gtr. 3



**Nashville-strung acous. gtr. (bottom four strings replaced with thinner strings tuned one octave higher) arranged for conventionally-strung acous. gtr. in open E tuning.*

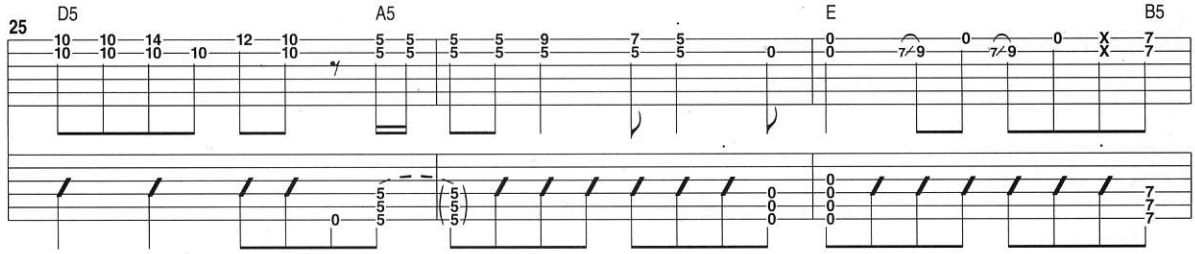
Gtr. 1



right I'm Jumpin' Jack Flash it's a

D5 A5 E B5

25

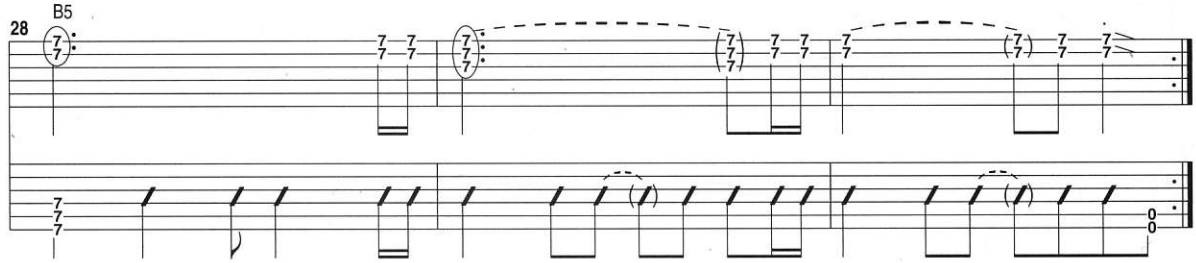


(1st time) go back to B
(3rd time) skip ahead to F Outro

gas gas gas

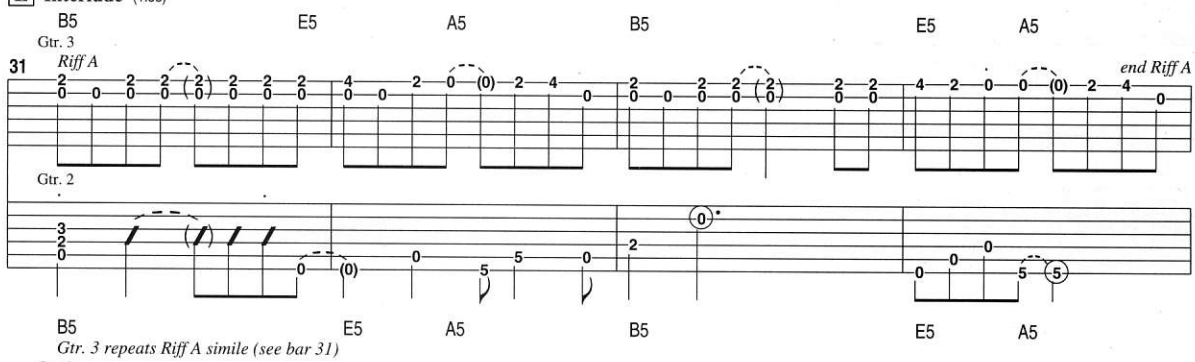
B5

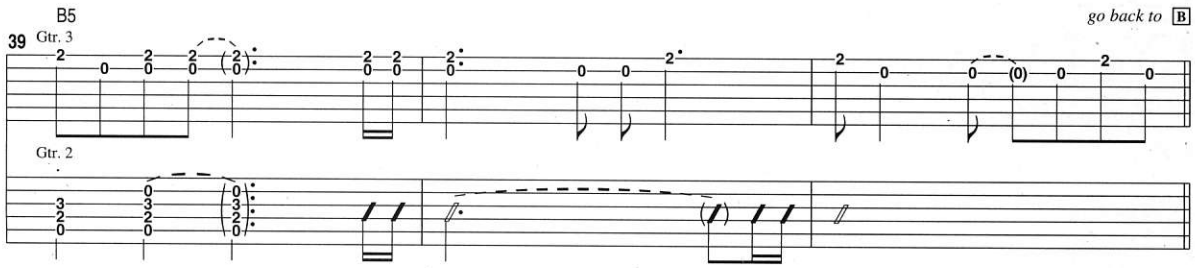
28



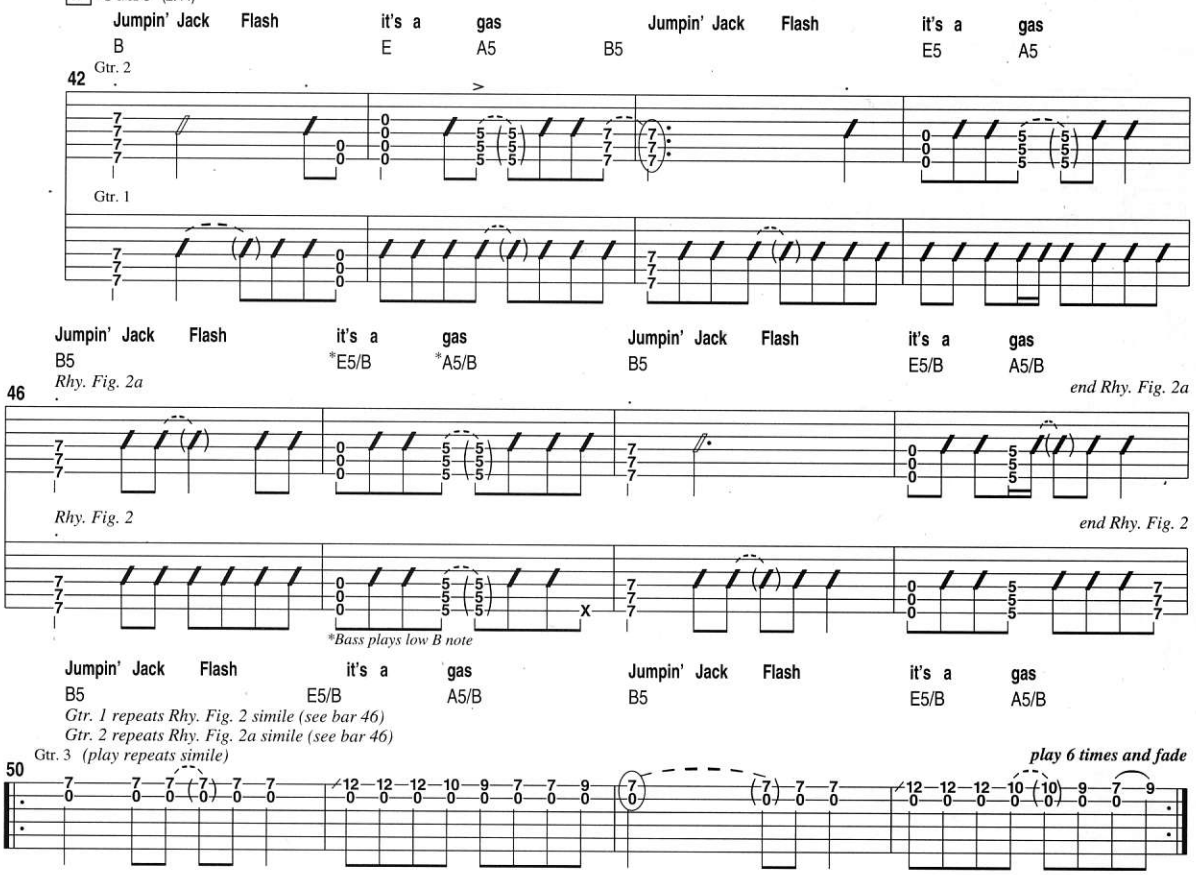
"JUMPIN' JACK FLASH"

E **Interlude** (1:33)





F **Outro** (2:44)

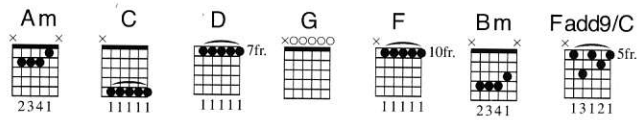


"WILD HORSES"

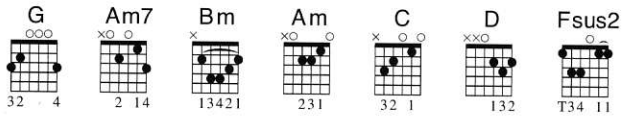
As heard on **FORTY LICKS** (ABKCO)
Words and Music by **Mick Jagger** & **Keith Richards** • *Transcribed by* **Adam Perlmutter**

Gtr. 1 is in standard tuning (low to high: E A D G B E).
Gtr. 2 is in open G tuning (low to high: D G D G B D).
Gtr. 3 is in Nashville tuning (low to high: E A D G B E;
low E, A, D and G strings are replaced with thinner strings tuned one octave higher).

Gtr. 2 chords

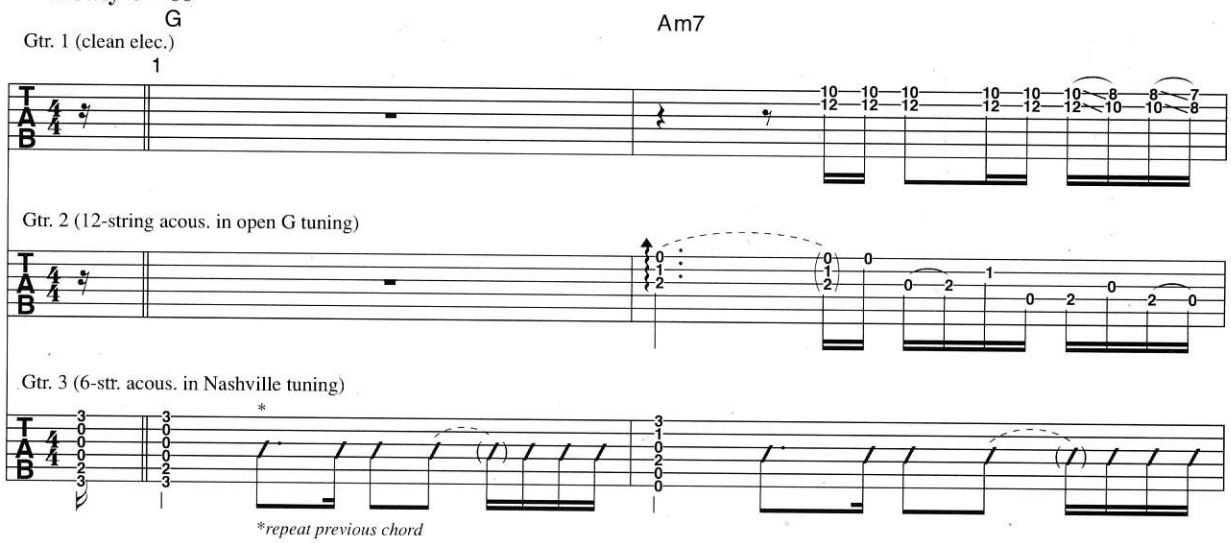


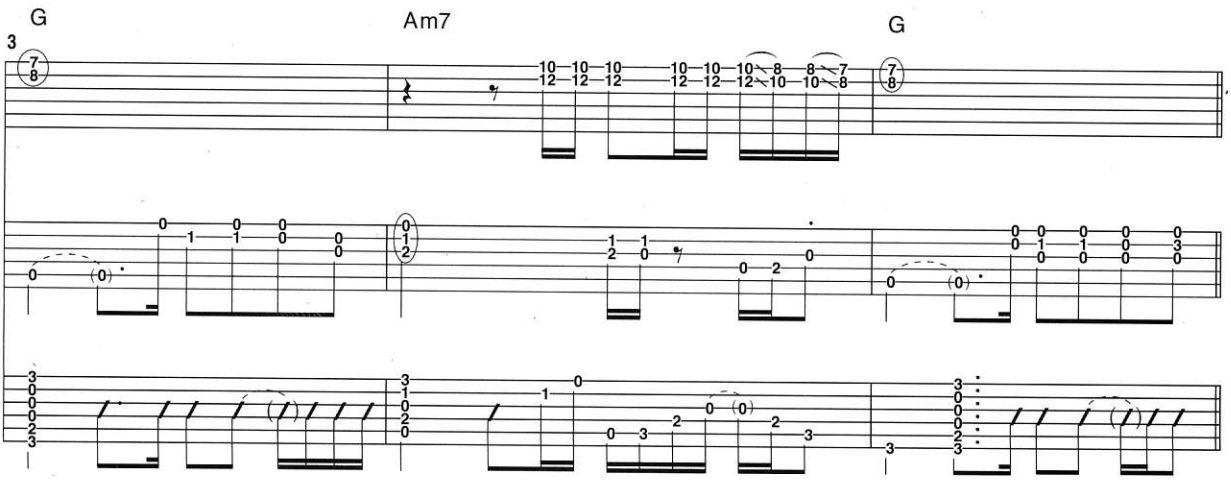
Gtr. 3 chords



A **Intro** (0:00)

Slowly ♩ = 66





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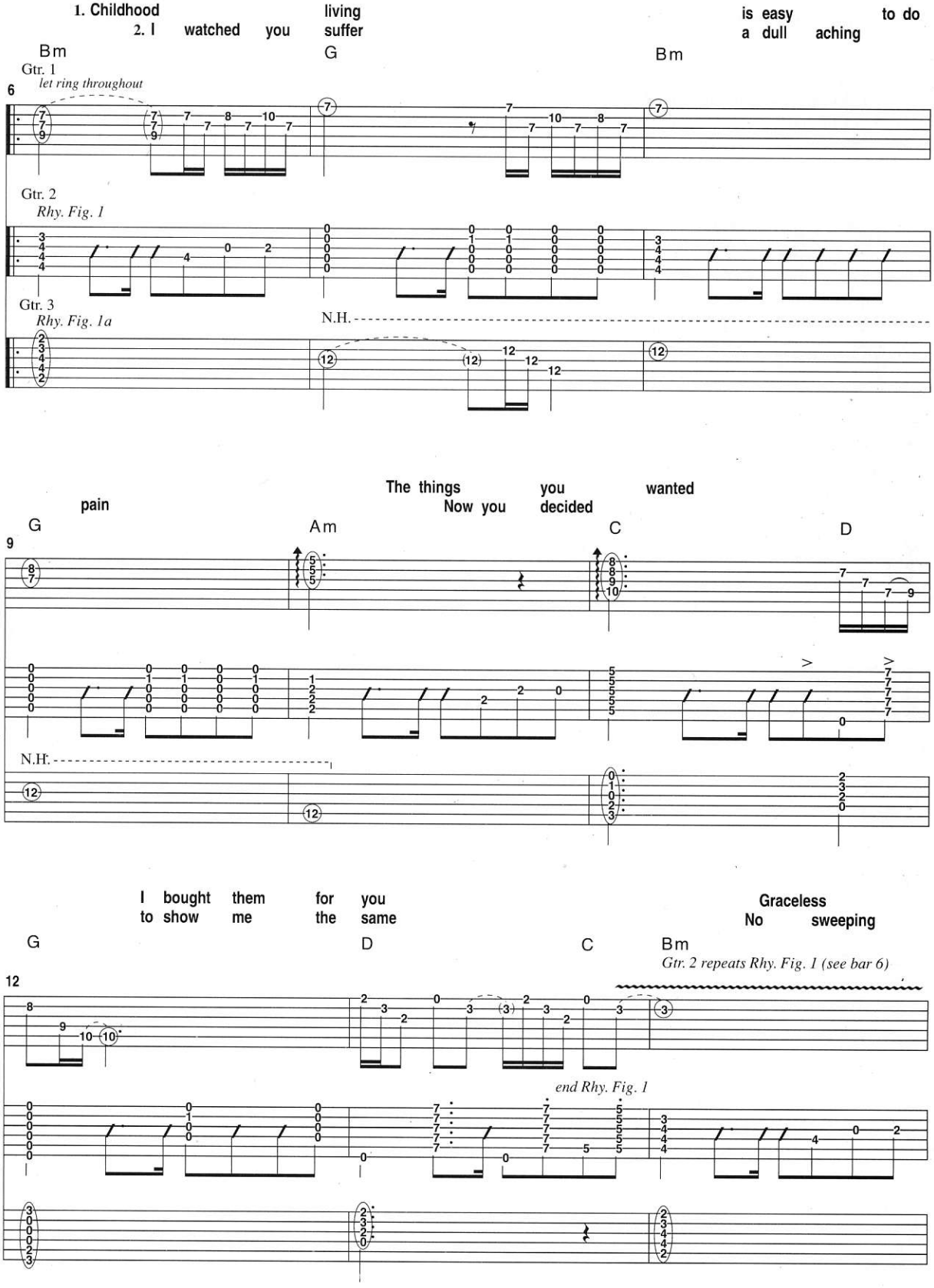
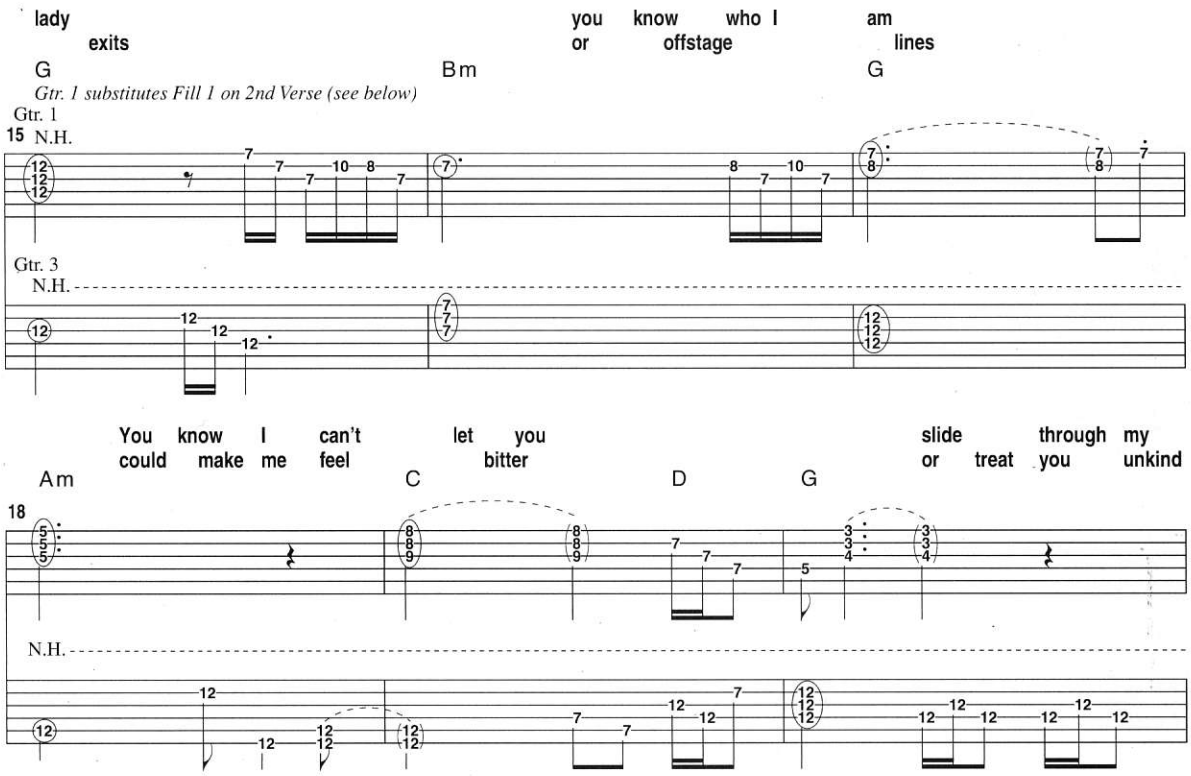
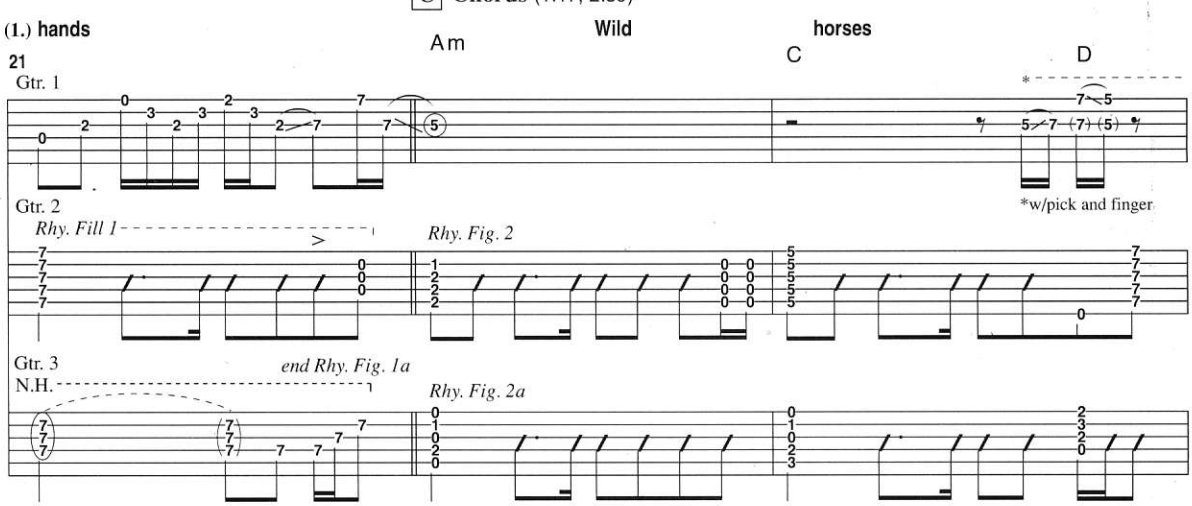
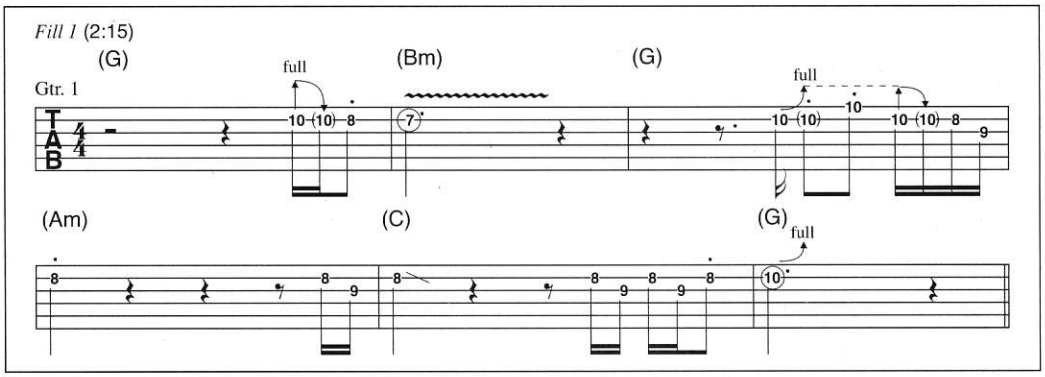
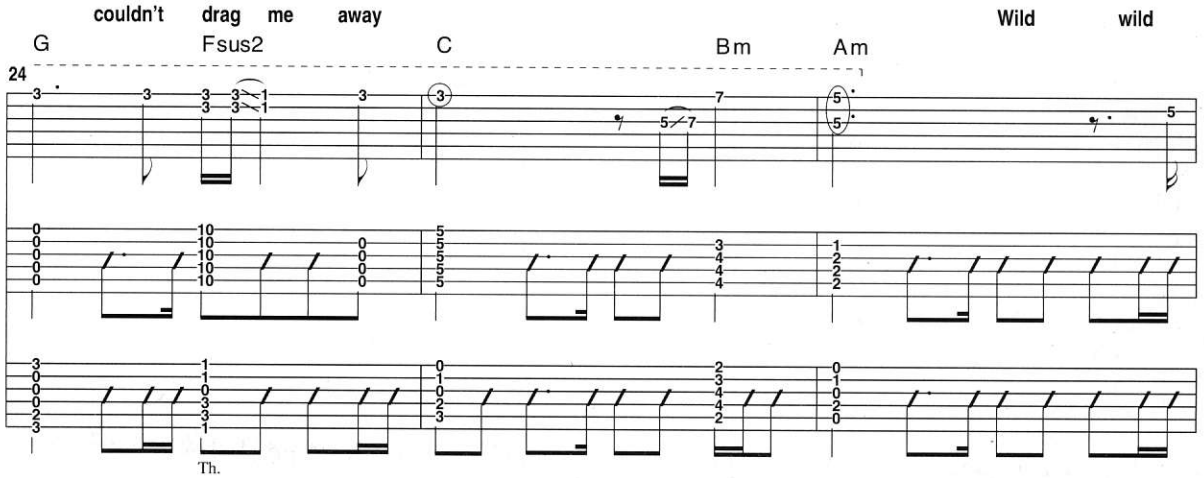
B **1st and 2nd Verses** (0:20, 1:45)

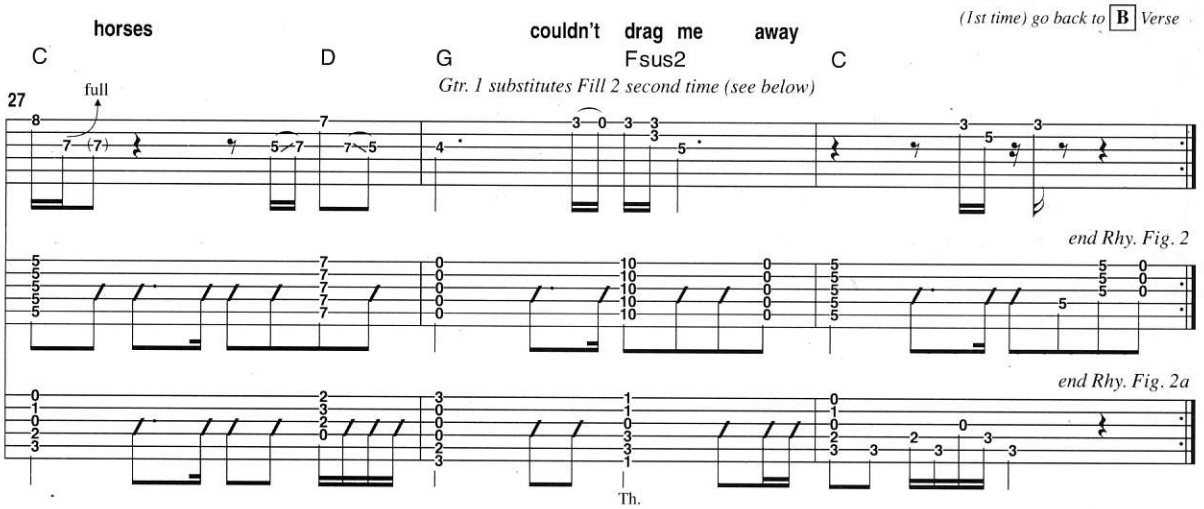



lady exits
you know who I am
or offstage lines
G
Bm
G
Gtr. 1 substitutes Fill 1 on 2nd Verse (see below)
Gtr. 1
15 N.H.
Gtr. 3
N.H.
You know I can't let you slide through my
could make me feel bitter or treat you unkind
Am
C
D
G
18
N.H.

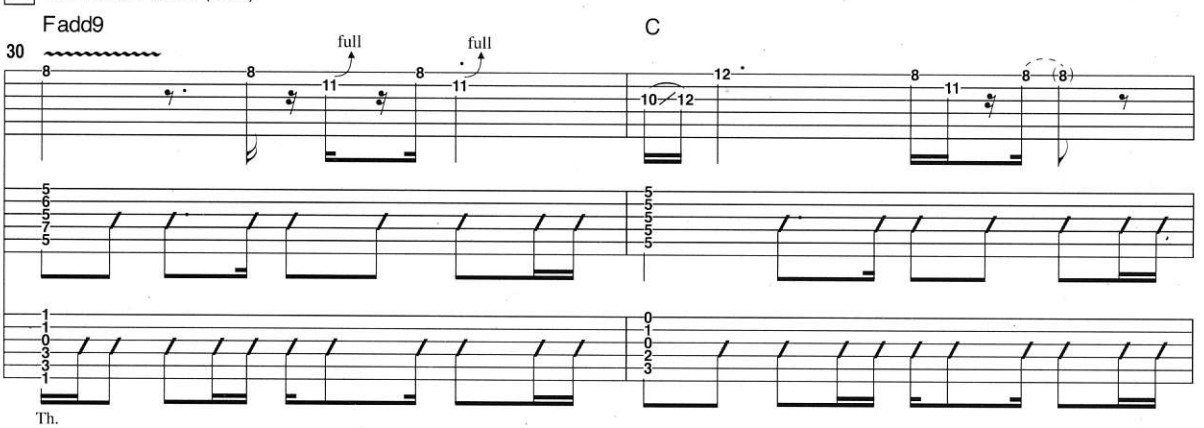

C Chorus (1:17, 2:39)
(1.) hands
Wild horses
Am
C
D
21
Gtr. 1
Gtr. 2
*w/pick and finger
Rhy. Fill 1
Rhy. Fig. 2
Gtr. 3
N.H.
end Rhy. Fig. 1a
Rhy. Fig. 2a

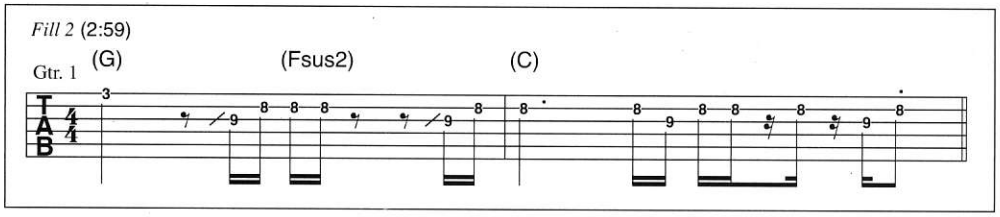

Fill 1 (2:15)
(G)
(Bm)
(G)
Gtr. 1
full
full
(Am)
(C)
(G)
full

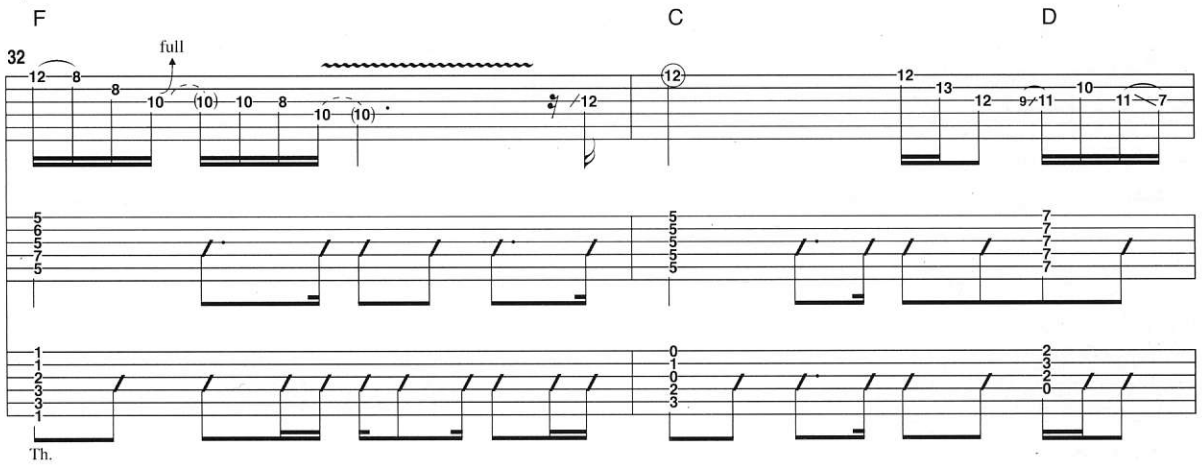


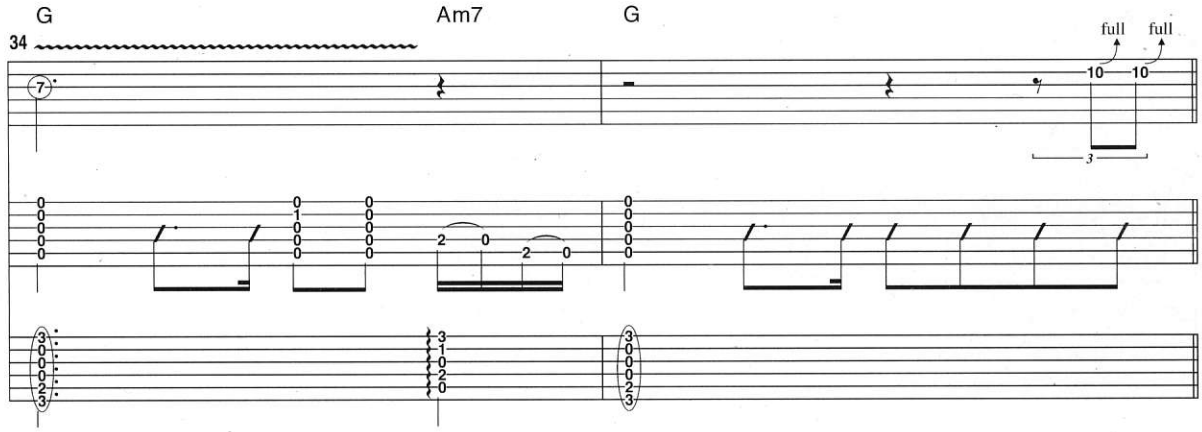


D **1st Guitar Solo** (3:05)



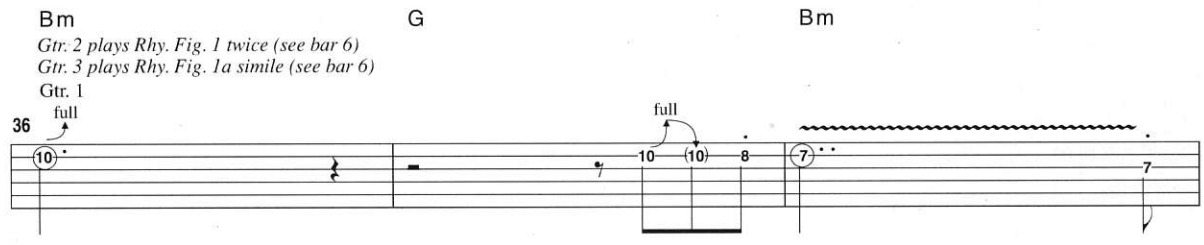




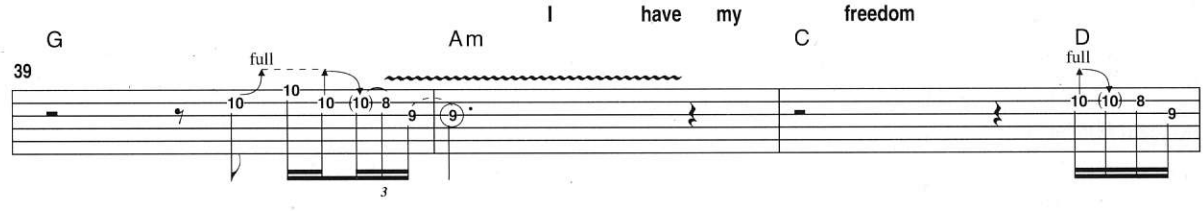


E **3rd Verse** (3:25)

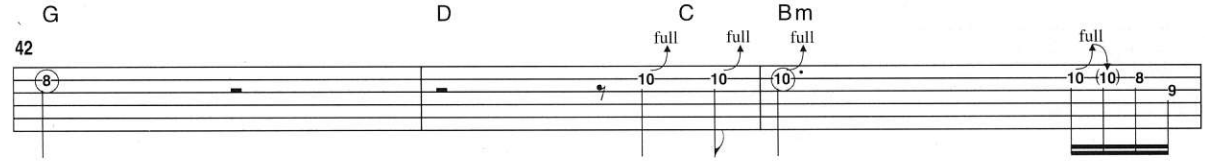
I know I've dreamed you a sin and a lie



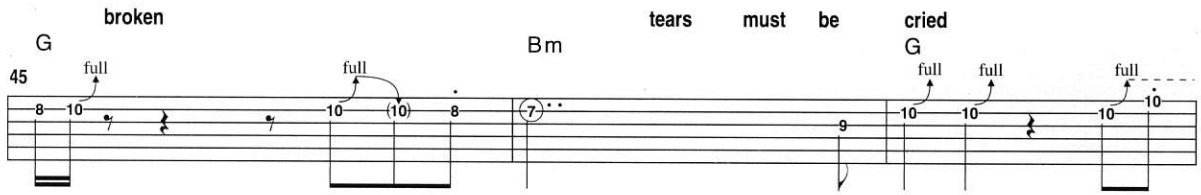
I have my freedom

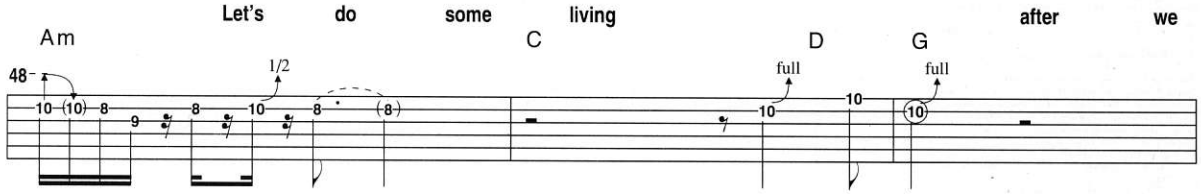


but I don't have much time Faith has been

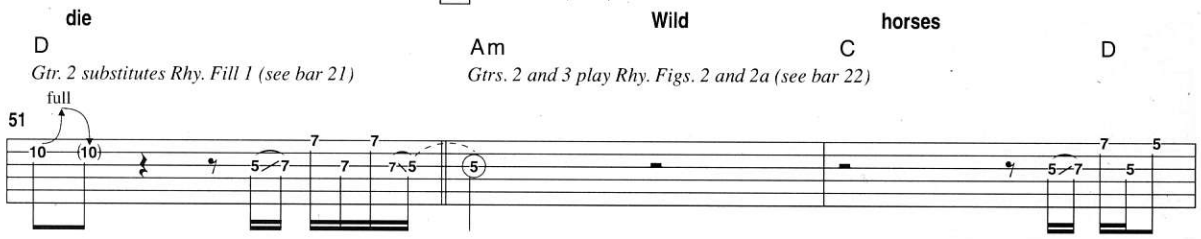


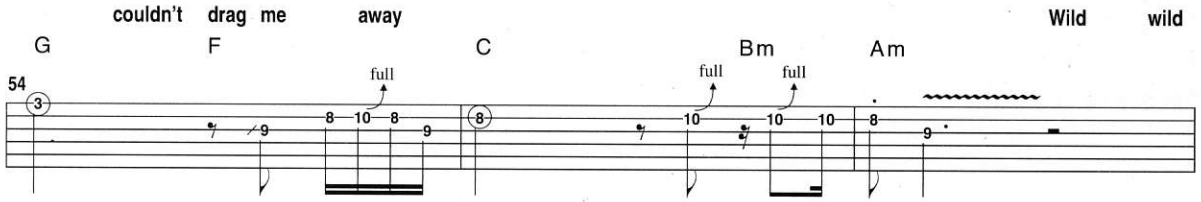
"WILD HORSES"

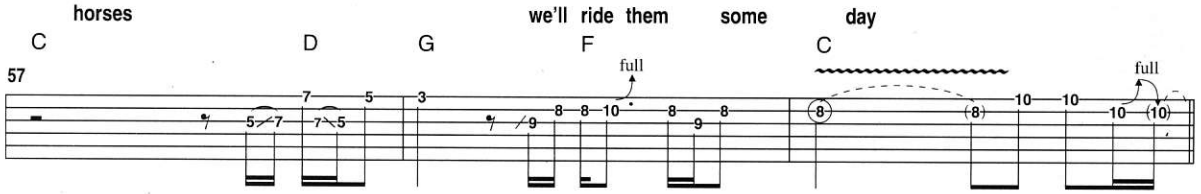




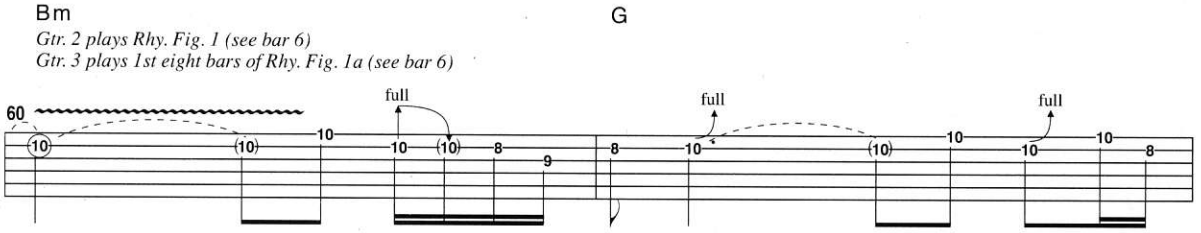
F **Chorus** (4:17)

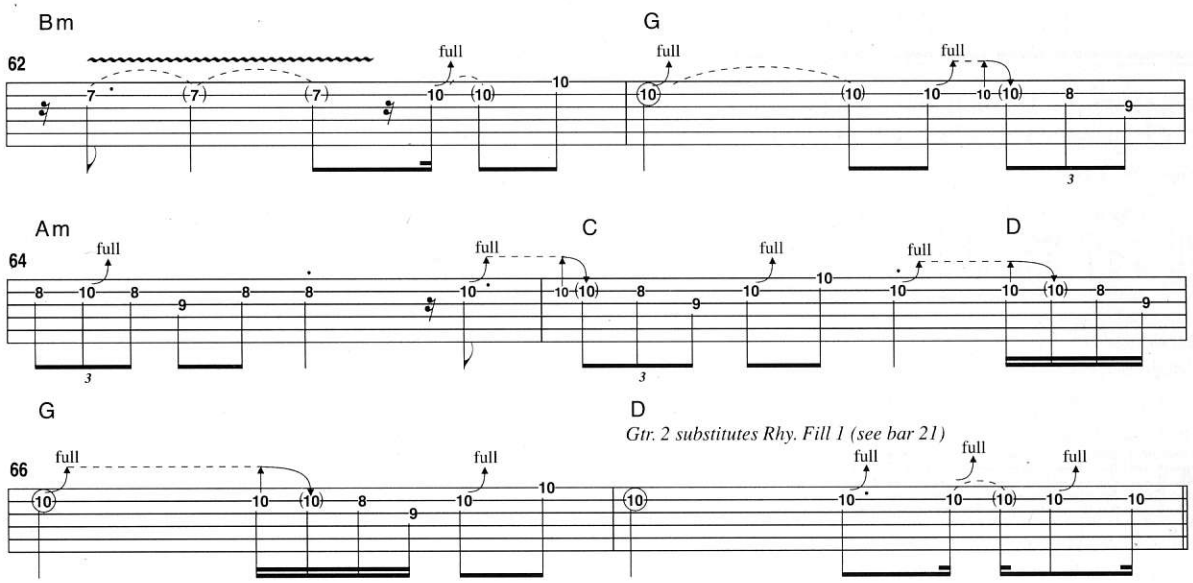




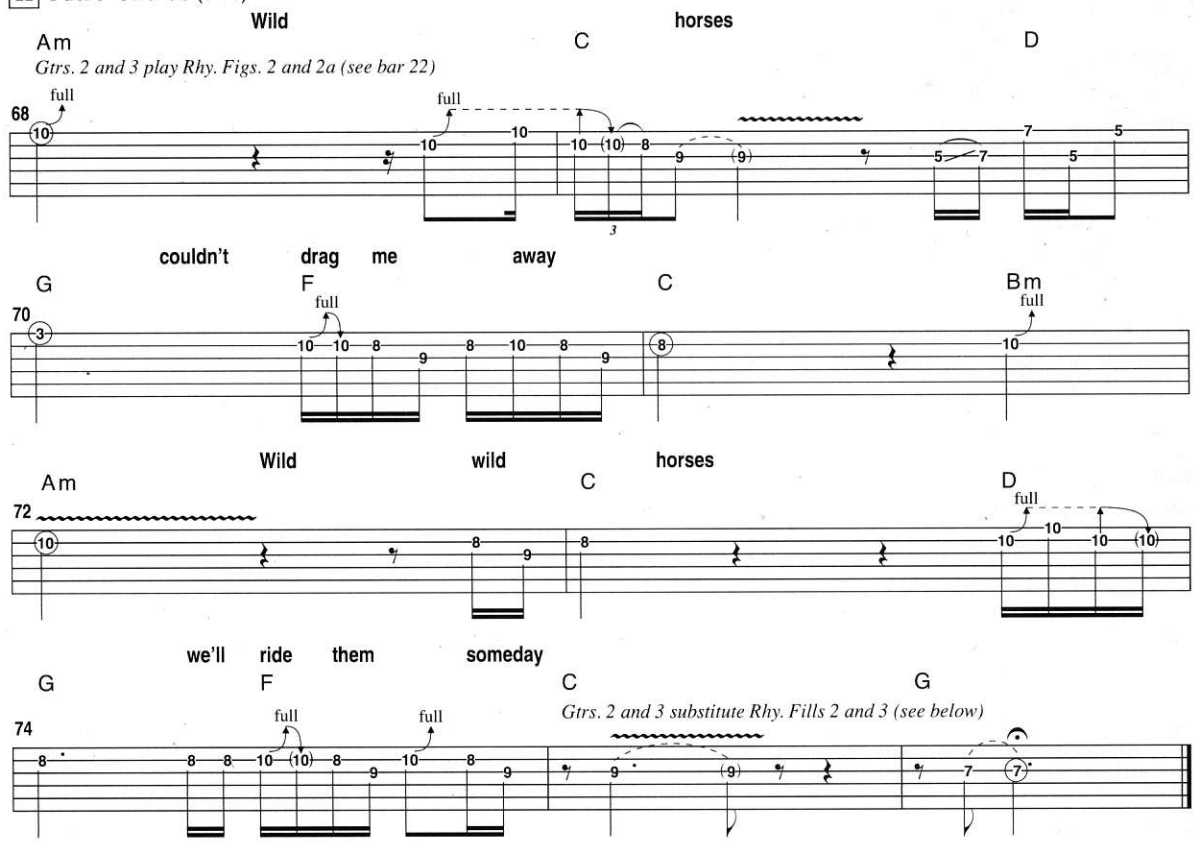


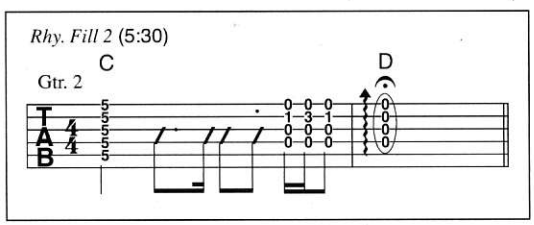
G **2nd Guitar Solo** (4:43)

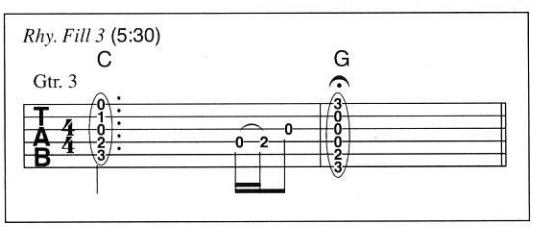




H Outro-Chorus (5:08)





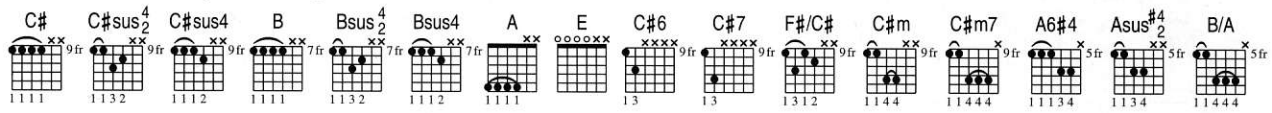


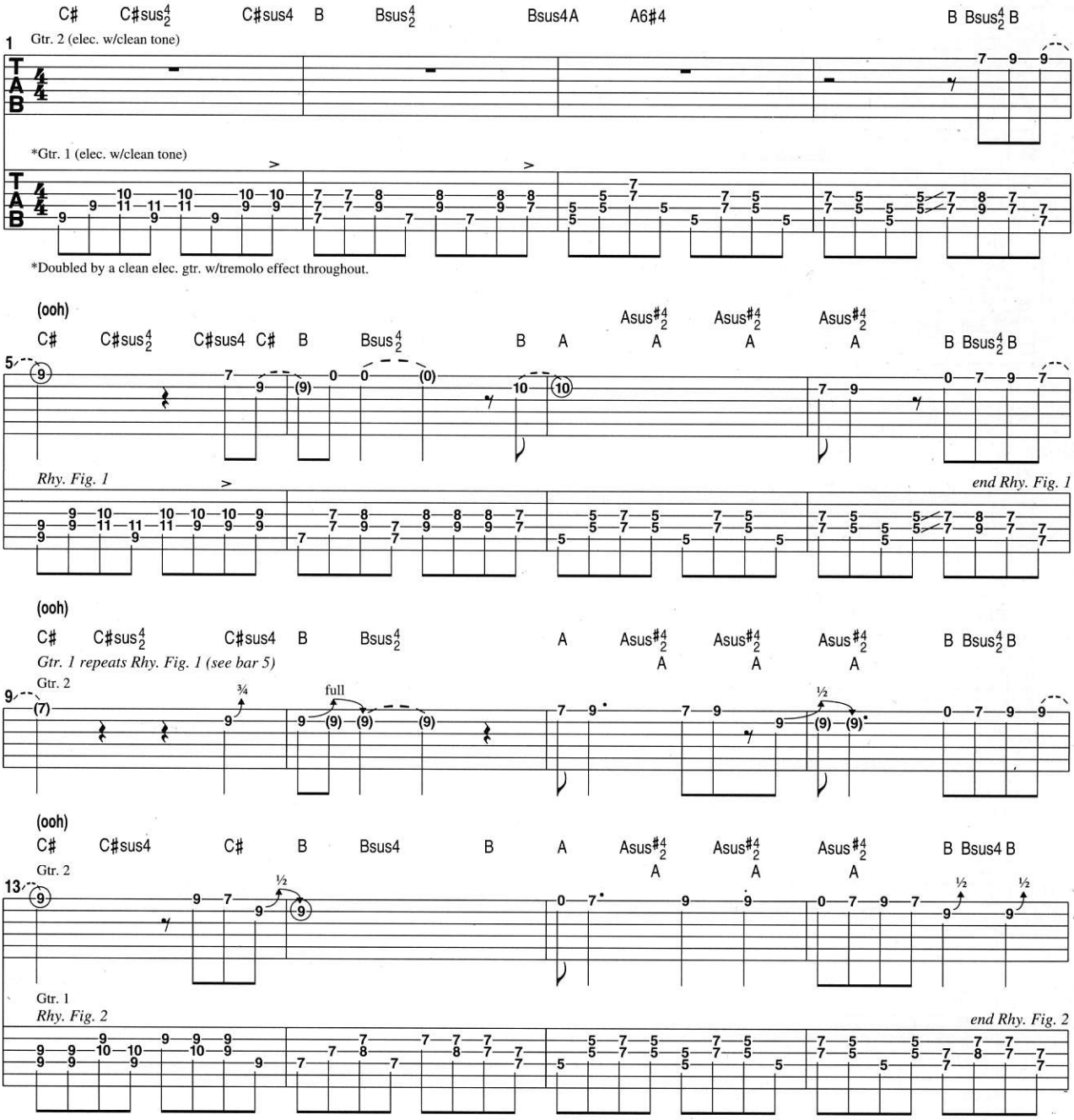
"GIMME SHELTER"

As heard on **LET IT BLEED** (ABKCO)
Words and Music by **Mick Jagger** & **Keith Richards** • *Transcribed by* **Jeff Perrin**

Gtr. 1 is in open E tuning (low to high: E B E G♯ B E).
Gtr. 2 is in standard tuning (low to high: E A D G B E).

Chords for Gtr. 1 (open E tuning)



A Intro (0:00)
Moderately ♩ = 118

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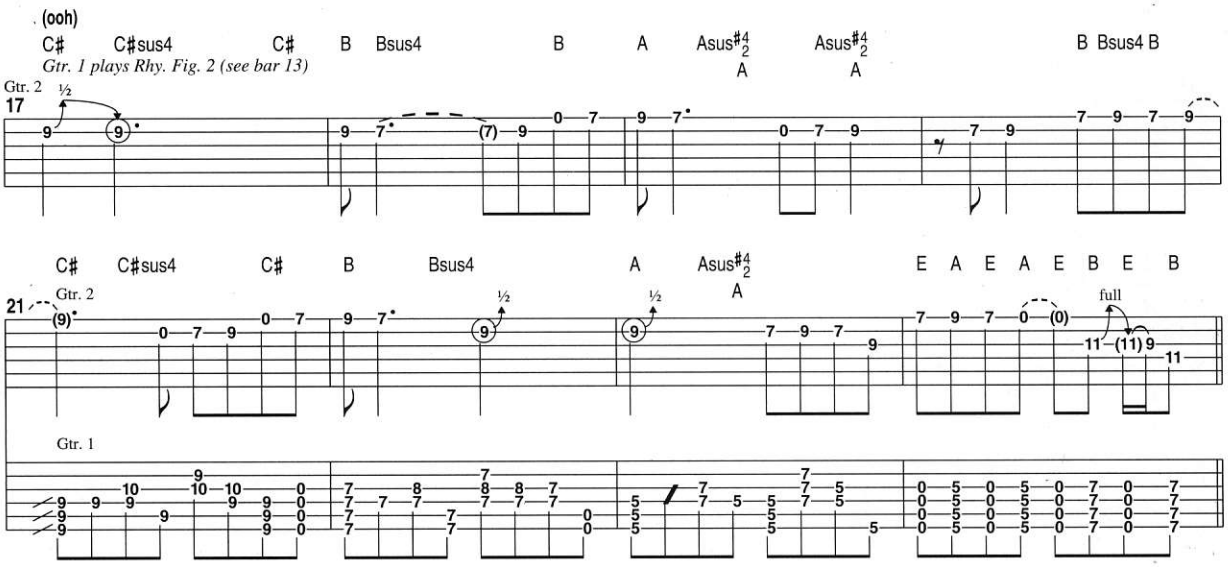
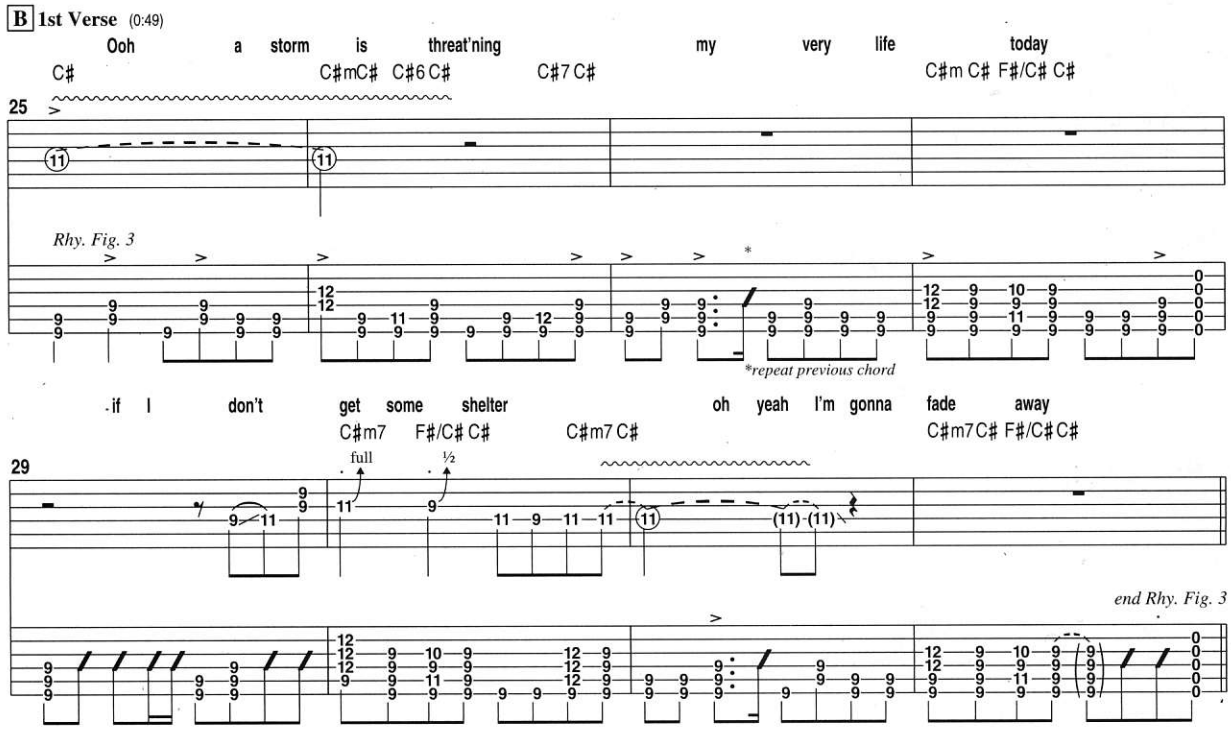
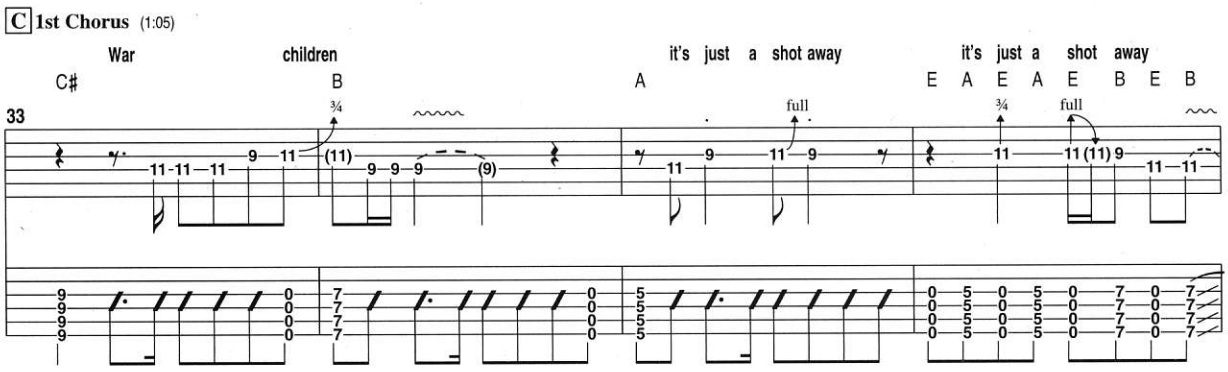
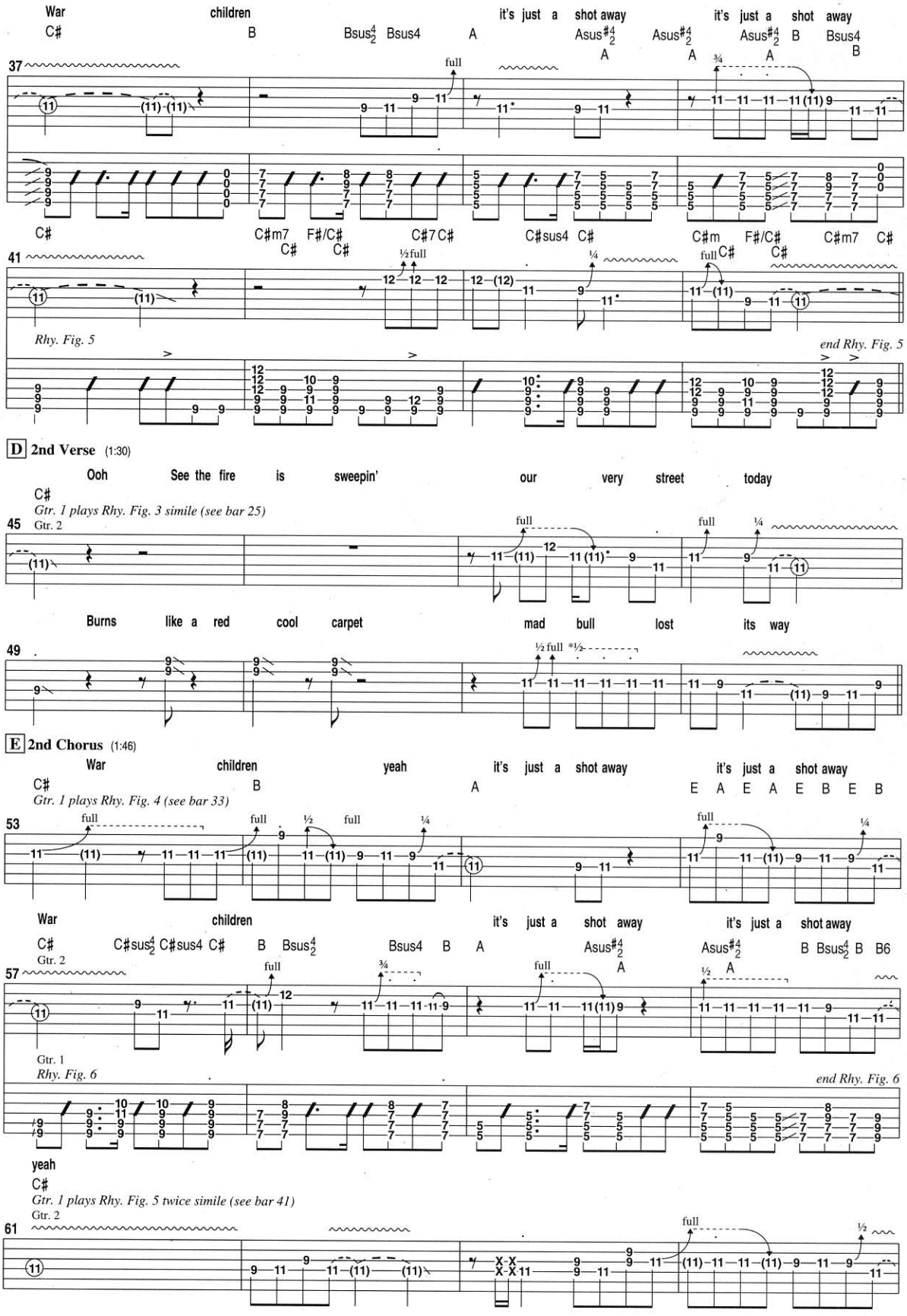
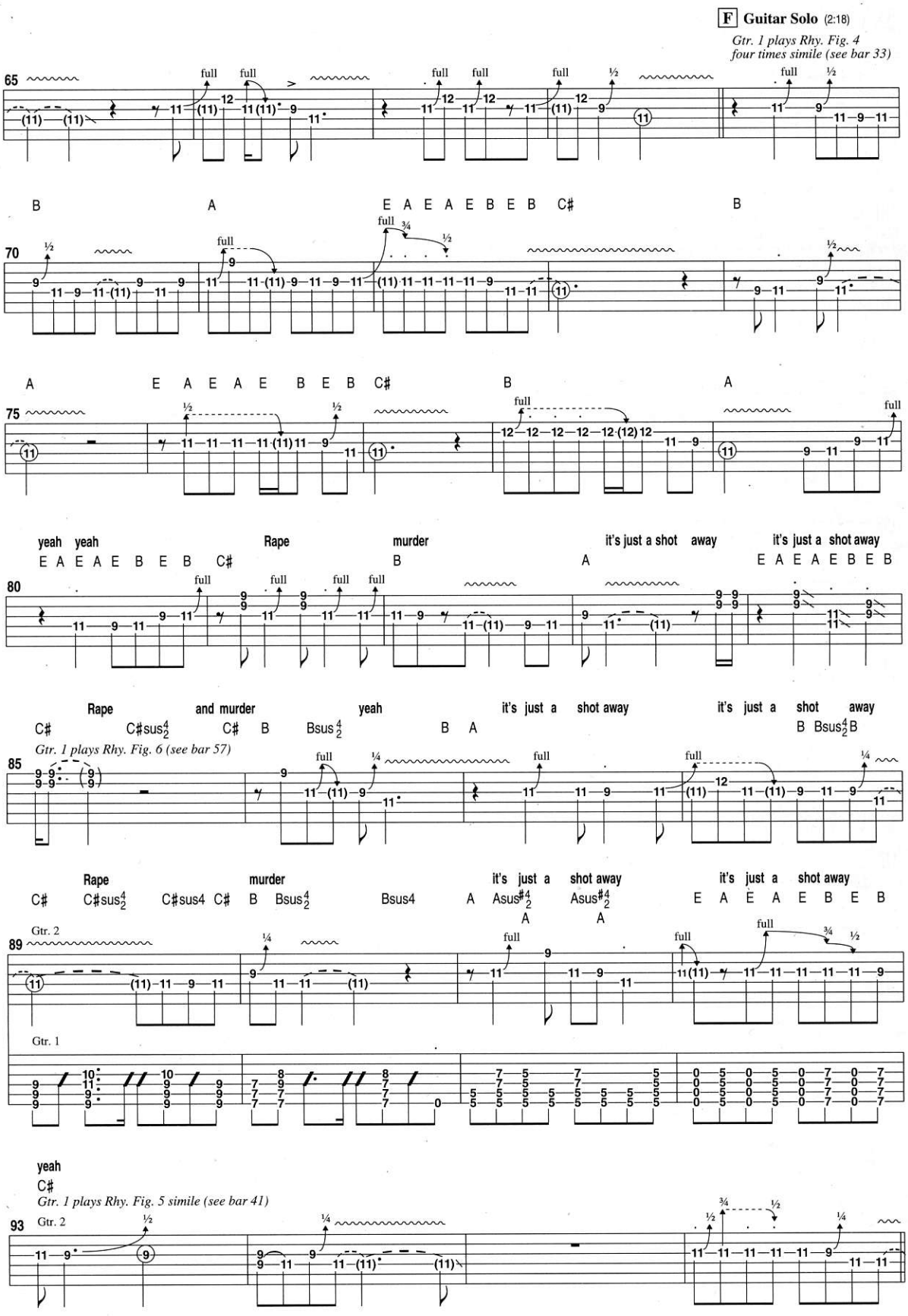

(ooh)
C# C#sus4 C# B Bsus4 B A Asus4 Asus4 B Bsus4 B
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 13)
Gtr. 2
17
C# C#sus4 C# B Bsus4 A Asus4 E A E A E B E B
Gtr. 2
21
full
Gtr. 1


B 1st Verse (0:49)
Ooh a storm is threat'ning my very life today
C# C#mC# C#6 C# C#7 C# C#m C# F#/C# C#
25
Rhy. Fig. 3
*repeat previous chord
if I don't get some shelter oh yeah I'm gonna fade away
C#m7 F#/C# C# C#m7 C# C#m7 C# F#/C# C#
29
full
end Rhy. Fig. 3


C 1st Chorus (1:05)
War children it's just a shot away it's just a shot away
C# B A E A E A E B E B
33
full
full


War children it's just a shot away it's just a shot away
C# B Bsus4 A Asus4 A Asus4 A B
37
C#
41
Rhy. Fig. 5
end Rhy. Fig. 5
D 2nd Verse (1:30)
Ooh See the fire is sweepin' our very street today
C#
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 simile (see bar 25)
45 Gtr. 2
Burns like a red cool carpet mad bull lost its way
49
E 2nd Chorus (1:46)
War children yeah it's just a shot away it's just a shot away
C# B A E A E A E B E B
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 (see bar 33)
53
War children it's just a shot away it's just a shot away
C# C#sus4 C#sus4 C# B Bsus4 Bsus4 B A Asus4 Asus4 B Bsus4 B B6
Gtr. 2
57
Gtr. 1
Rhy. Fig. 6
end Rhy. Fig. 6
yeah
C#
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 5 twice simile (see bar 41)
Gtr. 2
61


F Guitar Solo (2:18)
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 4
four times simile (see bar 33)
65
full
B A E A E A E B E B C# B
70
A E A E A E B E B C# B A
75
yeah yeah Rape murder it's just a shot away it's just a shot away
E A E A E B E B C# B A E A E A E B E B
80
Rape and murder yeah it's just a shot away it's just a shot away
C# C#sus4 C# B Bsus4 B A B Bsus4 B
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 6 (see bar 57)
85
Rape murder it's just a shot away it's just a shot away
C# C#sus4 C#sus4 C# B Bsus4 Bsus4 A Asus#4 Asus#4 E A E A E B E B
A A
Gtr. 2
89
Gtr. 1
yeah
C#
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 5 simile (see bar 41)
93
Gtr. 2

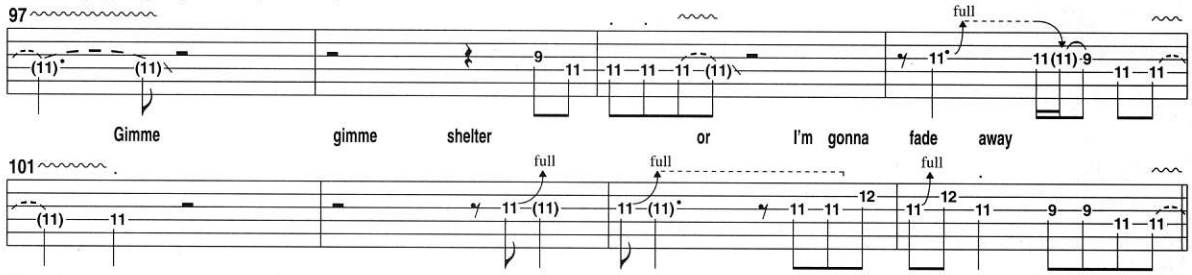
"GIMME SHELTER"

G **3rd Verse** (3:15)

Mm the flood is threat'ning my very life today

C♯

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 simile (see bar 25)

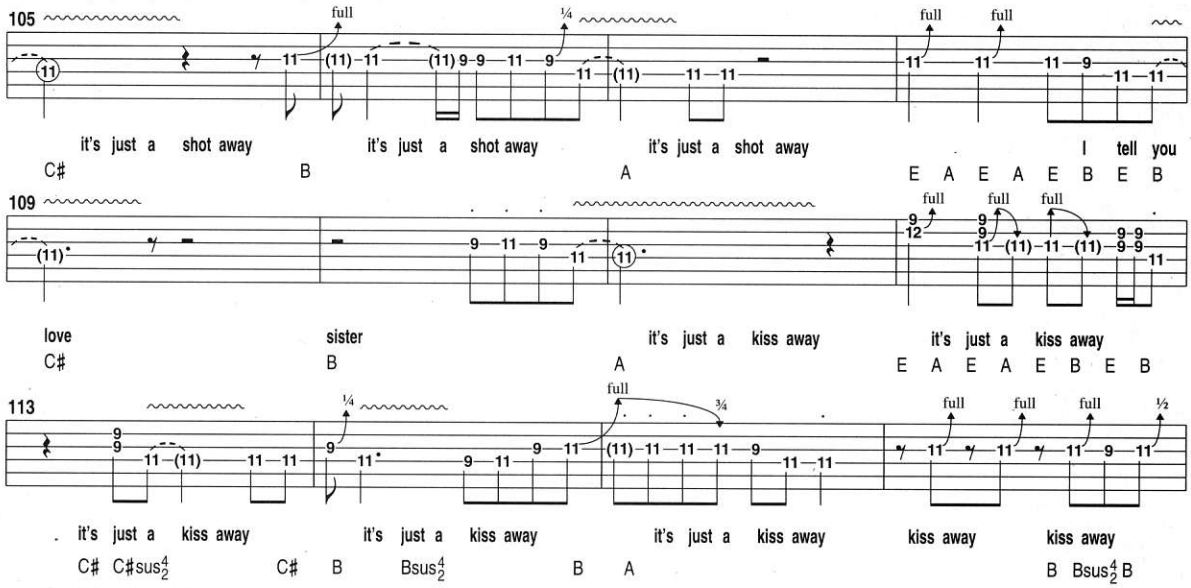


H **3rd Chorus** (3:30)

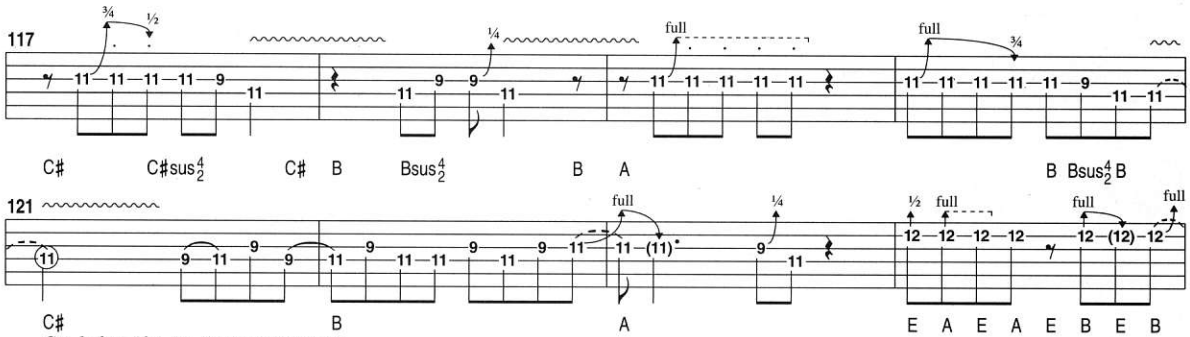
War children it's just a shot away it's just a shot away

C♯ B A E A E A E B E B

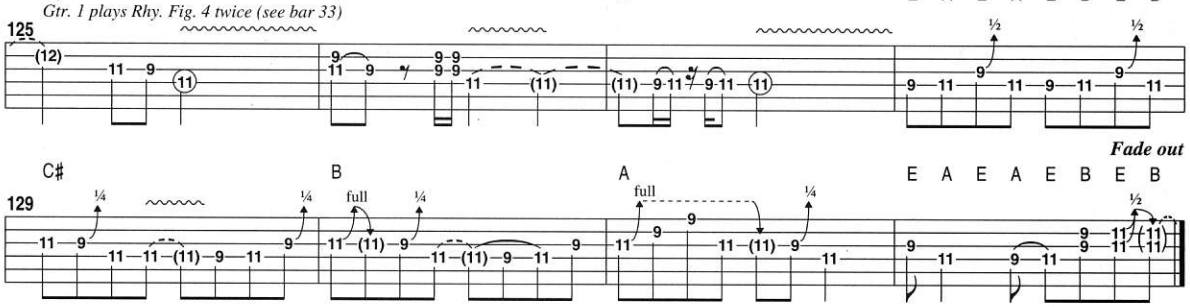
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 three times (see bar 33)



Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 6 twice simile (see bar 57)



Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 twice (see bar 33)

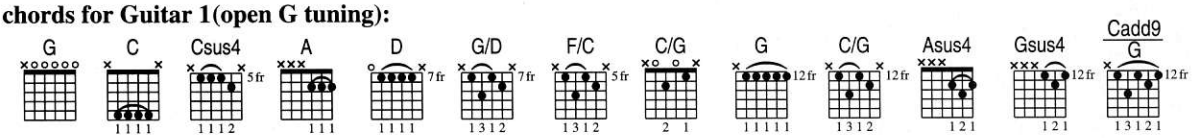


"HONKY TONK WOMEN"

As heard on **THROUGH THE PAST, DARKLY (BIG HITS VOL. 2)** (ABKCO)
Words and Music by **Mick Jagger** & **Keith Richards** • *Transcribed by* **Andy Aledort**

Guitar 1 is in open G tuning (low to high): D G D G B D.
All other guitars are in standard tuning (low to high: E A D G B E).

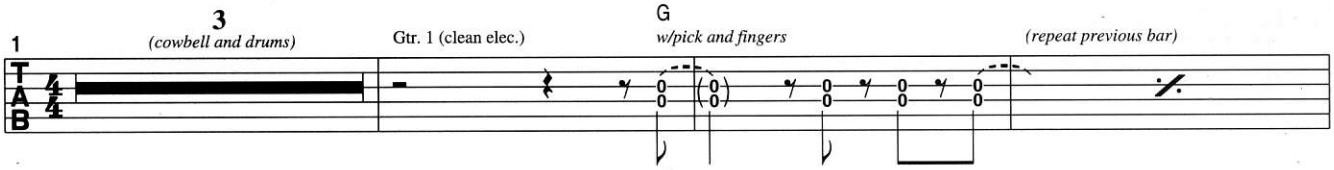
chords for Guitar 1(open G tuning):



Note: The tape speed was sped-up slightly during the mastering process; to play along with the recording, tune all strings slightly sharp.

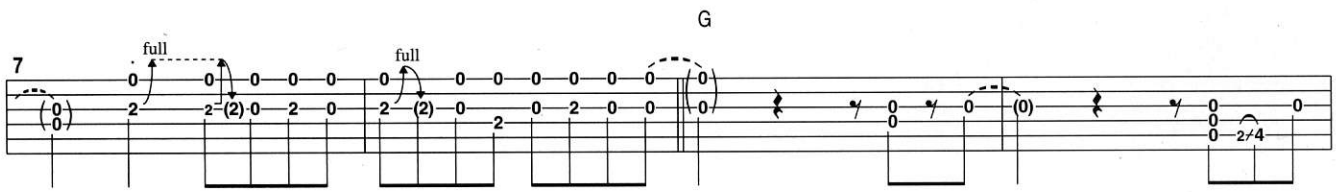
A Intro (0:00)

Moderate Rock ♩ = 116

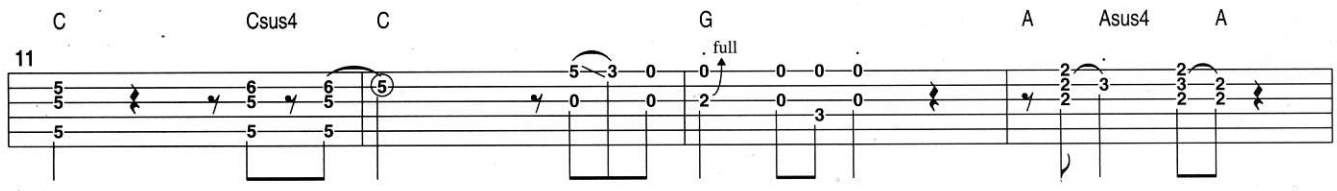


B 1st Verse (0:17)

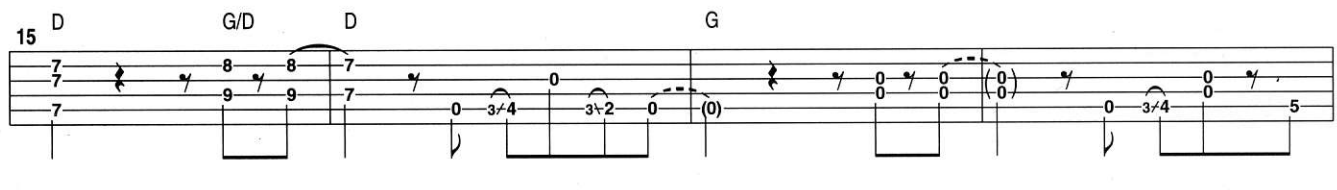
I met a gin-soaked barroom queen in Memphis



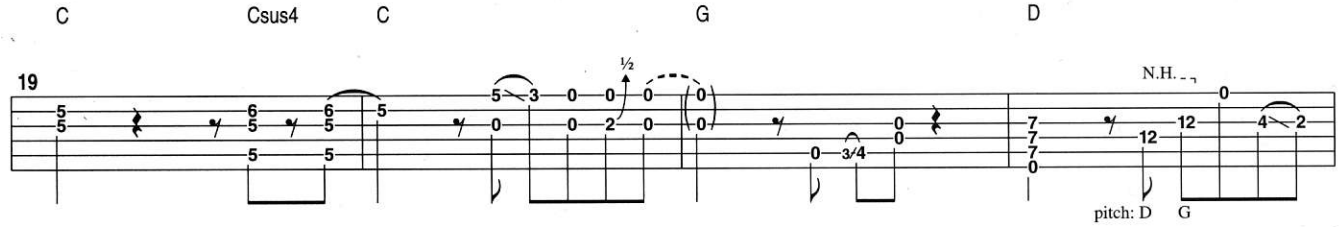
She tried to take me upstairs for a ride



She had to heave me right across her shoulder



'cause I just can't seem to drink you off my mind



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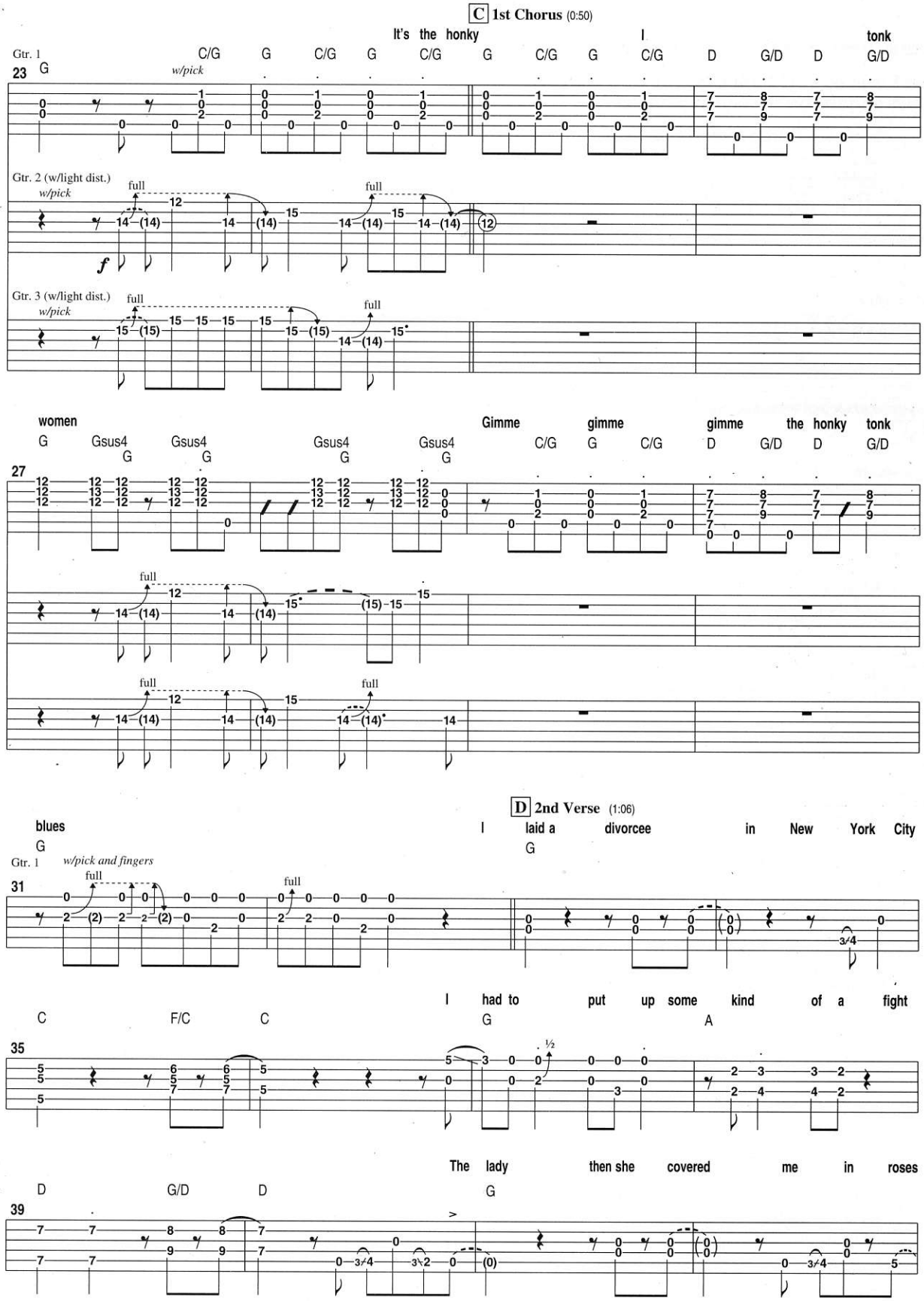
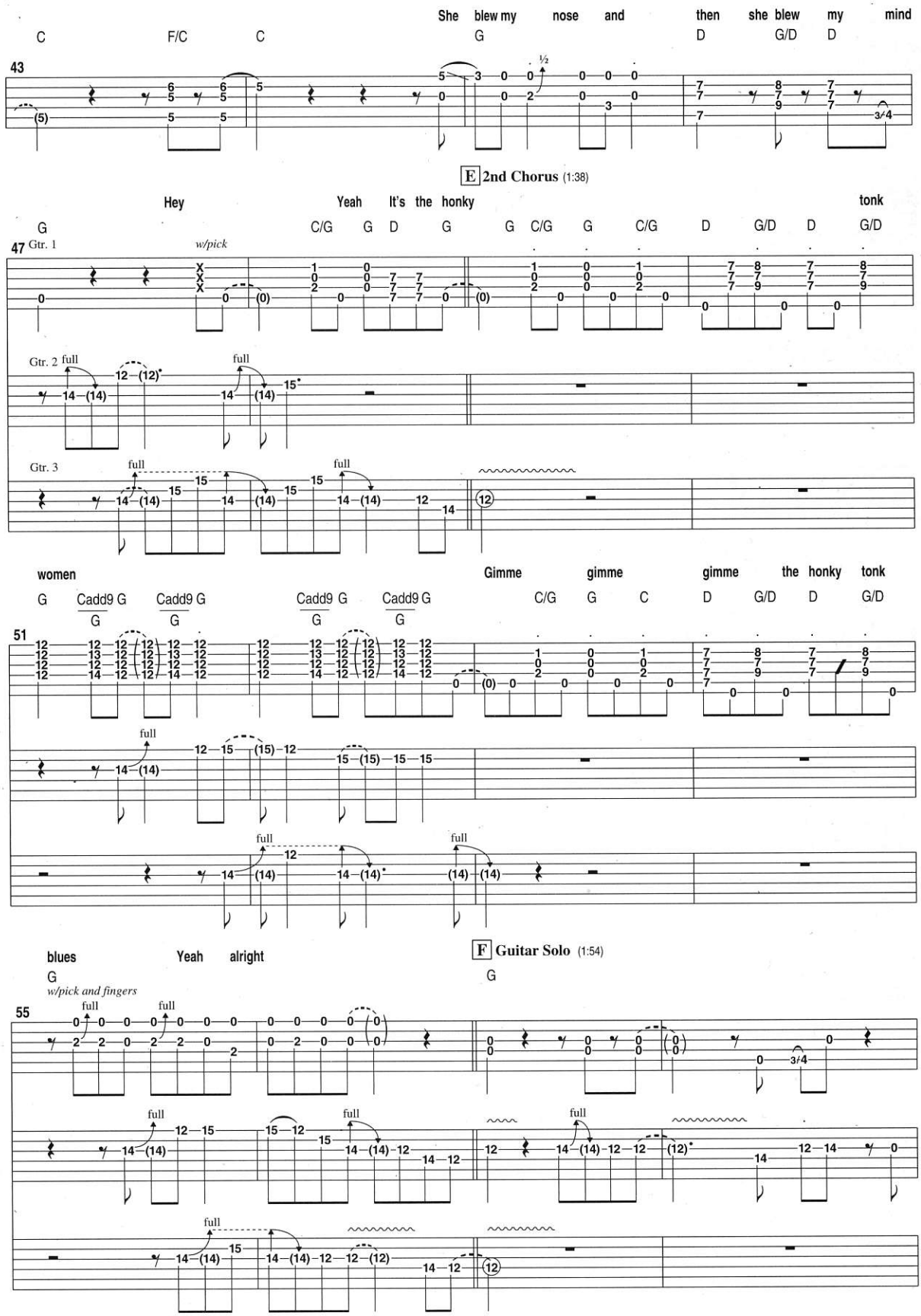
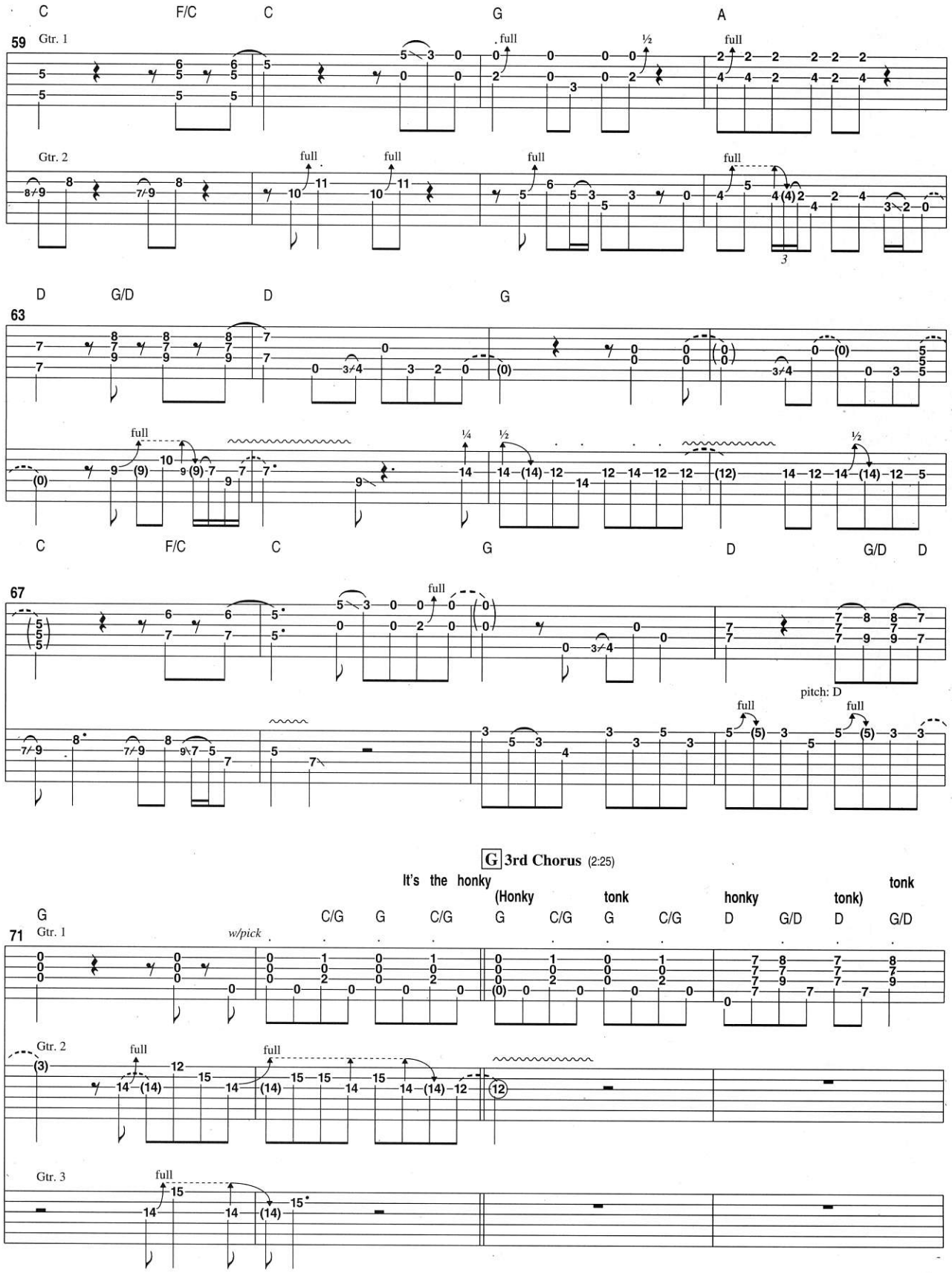
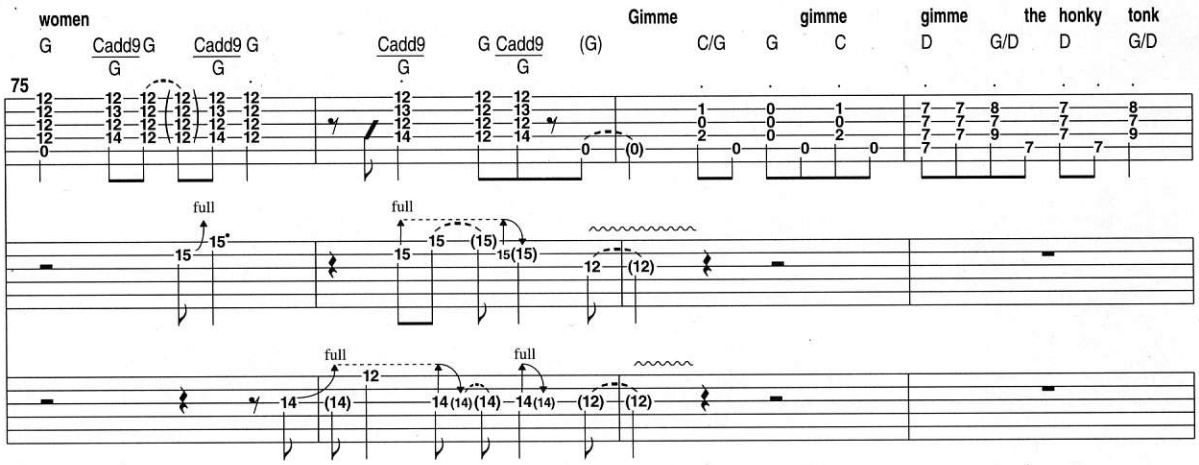
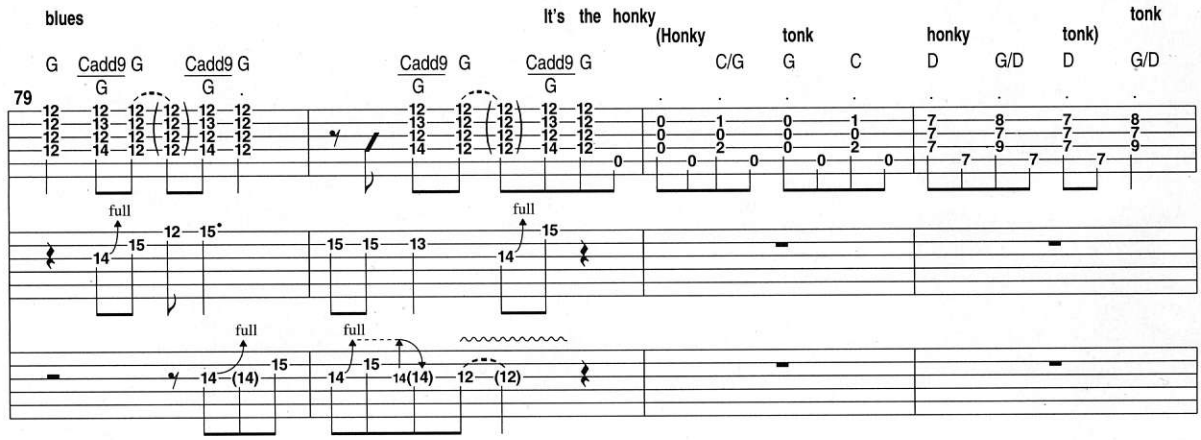
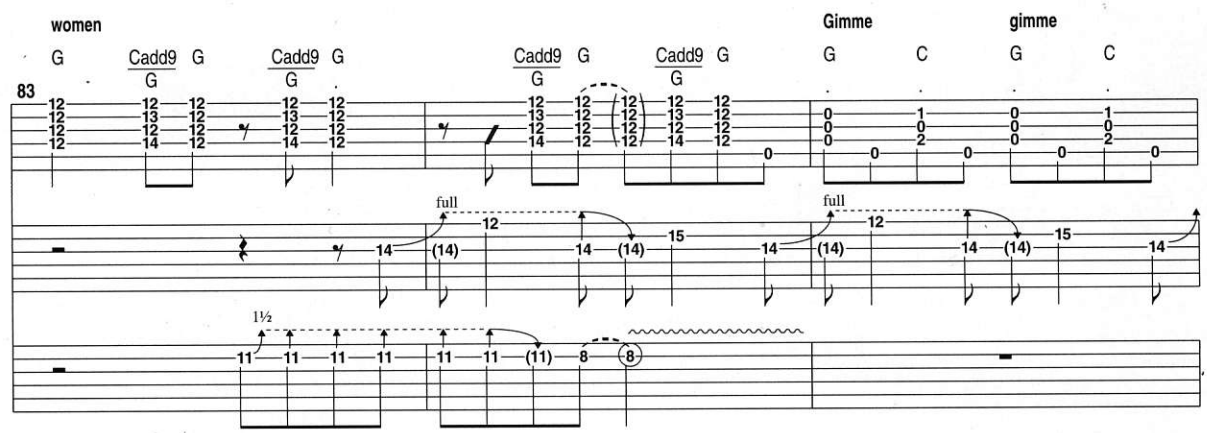
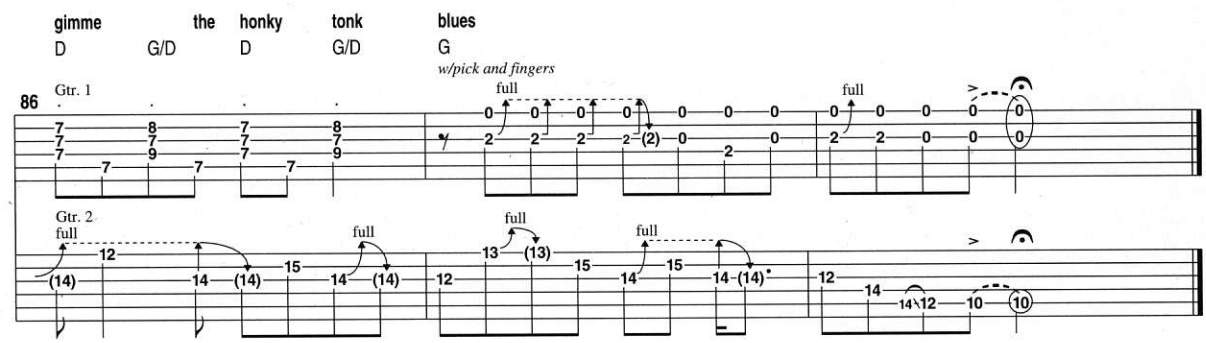

C 1st Chorus (0:50)
It's the honky I tonk
Gtr. 1
C/G G C/G G C/G G C/G G C/G D G/D D G/D
23
w/pick
Gtr. 2 (w/light dist.)
w/pick
full
Gtr. 3 (w/light dist.)
w/pick
full
women Gimme gimme gimme the honky tonk
G Gsus4 Gsus4 Gsus4 Gsus4 C/G G C/G D G/D D G/D
27
full
D 2nd Verse (1:06)
blues I laid a divorcee in New York City
G G
Gtr. 1
w/pick and fingers
full
31
I had to put up some kind of a fight
C F/C C G A
35
The lady then she covered me in roses
D G/D D G
39

She blew my nose and then she blew my mind
C F/C C G D G/D D
43
E 2nd Chorus (1:38)
Hey Yeah It's the honky tonk
G C/G G D G G C/G G C/G D G/D D G/D
47 Gtr. 1
w/pick
Gtr. 2
full
Gtr. 3
full
women Gimme gimme gimme the honky tonk
G Cadd9 G Cadd9 G Cadd9 G Cadd9 G C/G G C D G/D D G/D
51
full
blues Yeah alright
F Guitar Solo (1:54)
G
w/pick and fingers
55
full

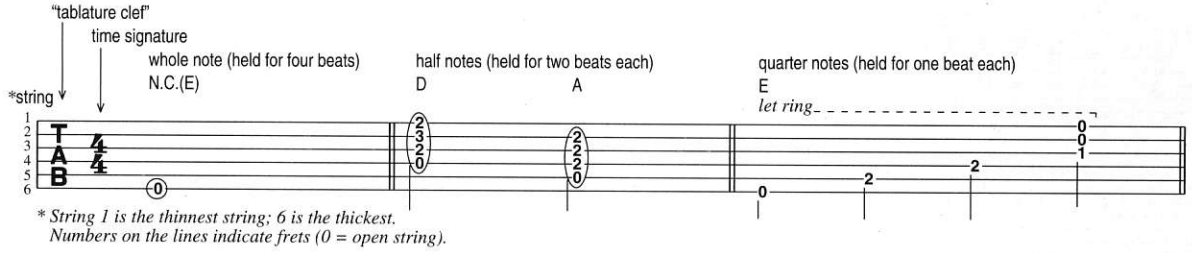
"HONKY TONK WOMEN"


women
Gimme
gimme
gimme
the
honky
tonk
G
Cadd9 G
G
Cadd9 G
G
Cadd9
G
G Cadd9
G
(G)
C/G
G
C
D
G/D
D
G/D
75
full
full
full
full


blues
It's the honky
(Honky
tonk
honky
tonk)
tonk
G
Cadd9 G
G
Cadd9 G
G
Cadd9
G
Cadd9 G
G
C/G
G
C
D
G/D
D
G/D
79
full
full
full
full

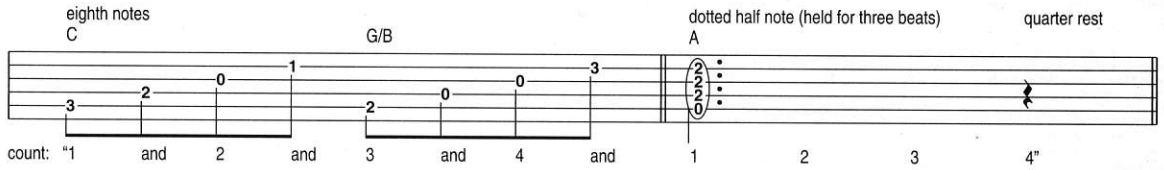

women
Gimme
gimme
G
Cadd9 G
G
Cadd9 G
G
Cadd9 G
G
Cadd9 G
G
G
C
G
C
83
full
full
1½

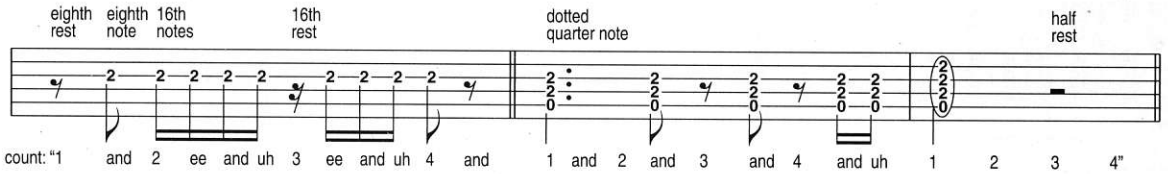

gimme
the
honky
tonk
blues
D
G/D
D
G/D
G
w/pick and fingers
Gtr. 1
Gtr. 2
86
full
full
full
full
full
full

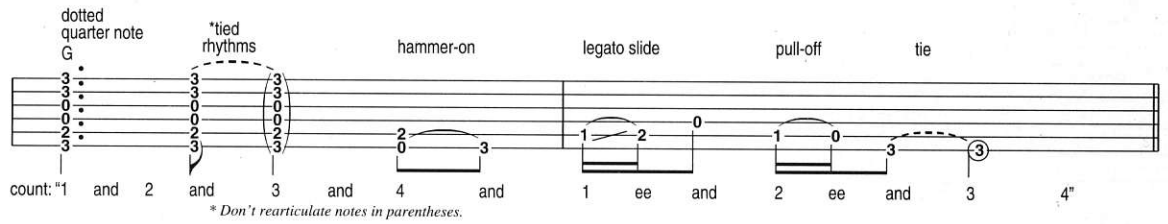
NOTATION GUIDE



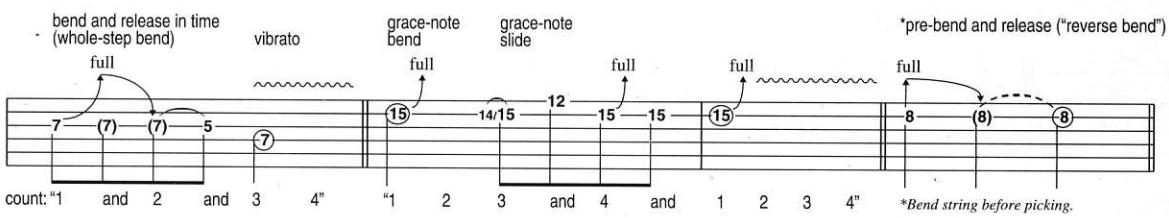
* *String 1 is the thinnest string; 6 is the thickest. Numbers on the lines indicate frets (0 = open string).*



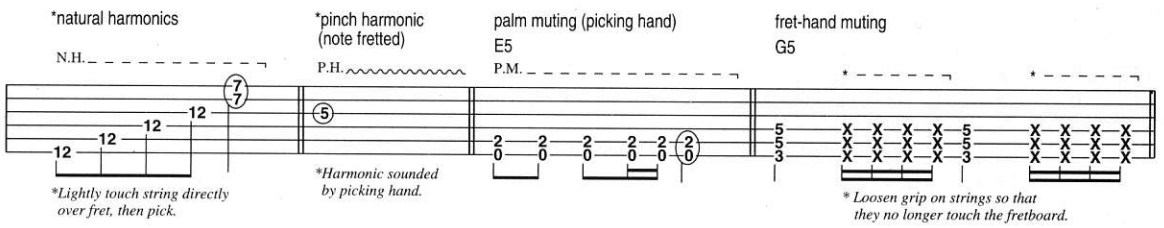




* *Don't rearticulate notes in parentheses.*



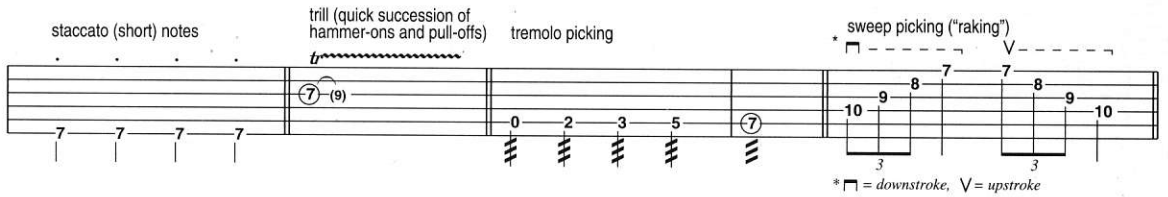
* *Bend string before picking.*



* *Lightly touch string directly over fret, then pick.*

* *Harmonic sounded by picking hand.*

* *Loosen grip on strings so that they no longer touch the fretboard.*



* ⊓ = *downstroke*, ∨ = *upstroke*

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